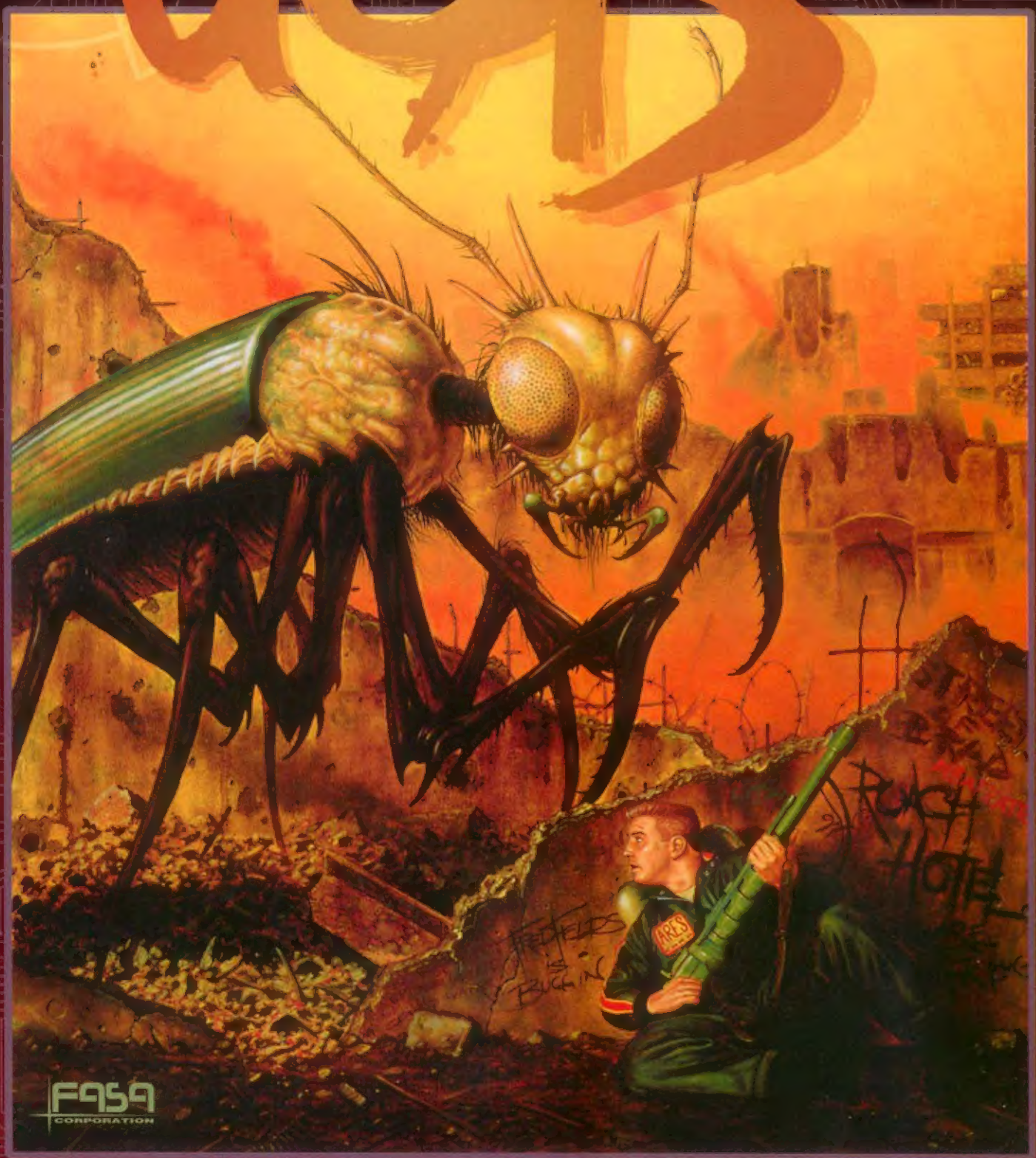
SHADOWRUN 7214

TARGET: UCAS™



TARGET: UCAS

fasa corporation

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 6
THE STATE OF THE UNION 7
The Scott Commission 8
The Usual Suspects 8
The Commission Members 10
Chief Justice Richard Scott 10
Senator David Ralph 11
Senator Melissa Washington 11
Representative Jess Rummens 11
Representative Sarah Lynn 12
Carla Brooks 12
Professor Frazer Williams 12
General Steven Coe Bowling 13
Law and Order 13
Witch Hunting 14
Bugged 16
The Family of Nations 18
Confederated American States 18
California Free State 19
Seattle 20
Native American Nations 20
Tir Tairngire 21
Aztlan 22
BOSTON—THE HUB 23
Taking Care of Business 24
History of a Corporate Boomtown 24
The Stock Exchange 28
Beacon Hill/The Back Bay 29
Route 128 29
Richard Villiers 30
That Ol' Black Magic 31
MIT&T 31
Harvard 33
The Dunkelzahn Institute of Magical Research 33
The Witches of Salem 34
Warpath 36
South Boston Blues 37
South Boston 37
Bloody Thursday 39
The Rox 39
The Boston Underworld 40
The Mafia 40
The Yakuza 42
The Triads 42
Unique Attractions 42
Boston Harbor and the Toxic Tea Party 42
The Catacombs 43
DETROIT—MOTOR CITY 46
Welcome to Motor City 48
History 48
King Ares 48
The Nanosecond Buyout 49
Cold Refuge 51
The Kingmaker 51
The Dragon Riots 52
What's Where 53
Downtown 53
Belle Isle 55
Windsor 56
Dearborn 56
Oakland County 57
The Auburn Blight 58
Who's Who 60
Damien Knight 60
Leonard Aurelius 61
Roger Soaring-Owl 62
Arthur Vogel 63
Opportunities 64
Inter-Ares Conflict 64
Toronto-Québec Front 65
Anti-Ares Factions 66
The Big Two 66
Bug Hunting 66
Ares Secrets 66
Hiring Hall 67
CHICAGO—OBLIVION'S END? 68
Outbreak 70
On Target 72
The City that Works! 75
Operation Extermination 75
Beyond the Wall 78
Insiders 79
Fumigation 81
Cabrini Refuge 81
Fallout 82
Shadows of Oblivion 84
GAME INFORMATION 86
Facts at a Glance 88
Getting In/Out 88
Cost of Living 88
Running in Boston 89
Adventure Sources, Employers and Opponents 89
Local Color 89
Sample Adventure Ideas 90
Running in Detroit 91
Local Color 91
Sample Adventure Ideas 92
Running in Chicago 93
Strain-III Rules 93
Background Count 97
Voids 97
Bugs 98
Ghouls 99
Campaign Themes 101
Adventure Ideas 103

TARGET: UCAS CREDITS

Writing
State of the Union, Boston and *Detroit* by Stephen Kenson
Chicago by Linda Naughton and Jonathan Jacobson

Original Chicago and Bug City Background Material
Robert Cruz
Tom Dowd
Mike Nystul
Diane Piron-Gelman
Christopher Kubasik

Product Development
Michael Mulvihill

Editing
Robert Cruz
Diane Piron-Gelman

Shadowrun Line Developer
Michael Mulvihill

Editorial Staff
Editorial Director
Donna Ippolito
Managing Editor
Sharon Turner Mulvihill
Associate Editors
Diane Piron-Gelman
Robert Cruz

Production Staff
Art Director
Jim Nelson
Assistant Art Director
Joel Biske
Cover Art
Fred Fields
Black and White Illustration
Tom Baxa, Jeff Laubenstein, Larry MacDougall, Peter Bergting
Layout
Fred Hooper

SHADOWRUN® is a Registered Trademark of FASA Corporation.
TARGET: UCAS™ is a Trademark of FASA Corporation. Copyright © 1997 FASA Corporation.
All Rights Reserved. Printed in the U. S. A.

Published by FASA Corporation • 1100 W. Cermak Road • Suite B305
Chicago, IL 60608

FASA Corporation can be reached on America OnLine (E. Mail—FASALou (Earthdawn), FASAInfo (BattleTech, Shadowrun, General Information) or FASA Art (Art Comments)) in the Online Gaming area (Keyword "Gaming"). Via InterNet use <AOL Account Name>@AOL.COM, but please, no list or server subscriptions. Thanks!

Visit FASA on the World Wide Web at http://www.FASA.com

SHADOWLAND V2.1

"I have taken all knowledge to be my province."—Francis Bacon

"Humankind cannot bear very much reality."—T. S. Eliot

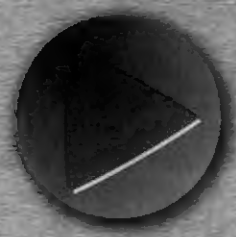
A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR:

Every once in a while we need to lift our heads from the muck and grime of doing crimes and look at the big picture (primarily to find more places to do crimes!). Here at Shadowland, we tend to focus on a single location or theme, post it to the board, discuss it, offer suggestions, discuss it again, and then post new information. We forget the big picture and so we never get to see the domino effect. Well, Shadowland is now ready to step back and take a look at all the ripples from last year's waves. Come along for the ride ...

THE BACK STOCK

Election 2057 (It's never really over: get prepared for 2060!)
The Big D's Will (Check here for your chance to win in the wyrm's lottery.)
The Underworld Sourcebook (The Criminal Underbelly in 2058)

Go To Complete Library Archives



THE DAILY SPECIAL

Boston! Detroit! Chicago!

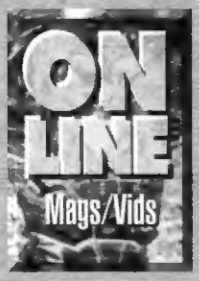
If these three cities make you think of tea parties, cars and bugs, you are way off base. Our esteemed deckers dubbed these fine municipalities as the places to be in 2058. You won't be considered a shadowrunner in good standing unless you have spent time in the catacombs, worked the Auburn Blight, or vacationed in the Containment Zone. Oh yeah, we also tossed in President Haeffner's State of the Union address just to keep you on your toes.

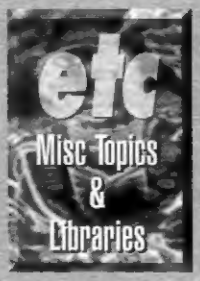
Go To Complete Library Archives

COMING SOON

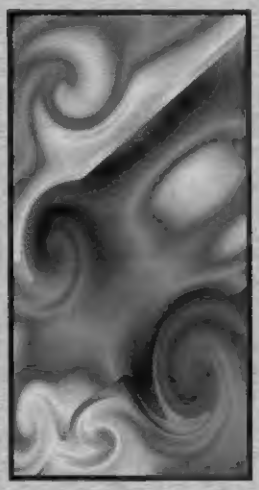
Rigger 2 (You gotta keep up with the SOTA!)
Cyberpirates (The swashbuckling smuggler's handbook)

Go To Complete Library Archives





NEWS



ASTRAL SAMPLINGS

Astral space hasn't seen this much news since someone spotted Jesus and Jerry Garcia eating BBQ beef while floating over a trailer park in South Dakota. Click here to get everything we got on astral phenomena, astral bugs and astral death, posted by the mages who checked out Operation Extermination.

THEM WACKY ELVES

It looks like the dam is about to burst in Tir Tairngire. Ehran's a big hit in the UCAS, but Lugh Surehand (whose picture appears next to the definition of paranoid in the Shadowland dictionary) is keeping the guards on red alert at the border and stewing in his own juices. Click here for rumors.

FLAVOR OF THE MONTH

For us regular decker types, the Matrix is alive with news, from the mysterious, quasi-religious (and darlings of the media) otaku to the new advances made by Renraku. Join us netheads and chat on what's up, what's down, and who to watch out for. PASSCODE needed. Contact Zebart The Rusty @ confab.56.tie_block/cache/nexus.

MILES LIVES!

We heard rumors that he was dead, that he never existed, and that he wasn't even human. But thanks to our Renraku-watchers, we got the scoop! Miles Lanier showed up at the Board of Directors meeting last month IN PERSON. Click here to see if he got the key to the executive washroom or the boot!

It's 22:12:08. Do You Know Where Your Meat Body Is?

INTRODUCTION

Target: UCAS is a different type of **Shadowrun** sourcebook. Unlike previous sourcebooks, which focused on a single location or subject, **Target: UCAS** describes multiple locations linked by a common theme: the rebuilding of the United Canadian and American States after the death of President Dunkelzahn.

Just as real-world events never occur in a vacuum, significant happenings in game universes should likewise have ripple effects. In **Shadowrun**, President Haeffner has stepped into Dunkelzahn's shoes, with heavy backing from Ares Macrotechnology. That megacorporation has added to its luster by cleaning up Chicago, otherwise known as Bug City, and bequests of stock from Dunkelzahn's will are causing shakeups throughout the corporate world that are making themselves felt in the formerly tranquil city of Boston. The UCAS is on the edge of chaos ... and that means plenty of action for shadowrunners with the brains and guts to take advantage of it.

Like other **Shadowrun** sourcebooks, **Target: UCAS** is formatted as an electronic document from that fictional world. Scattered throughout the document are comments and additions from readers who seek to correct, expand, corroborate or contradict the information it presents. Because this "black" information comes from characters within the game universe, players or characters cannot safely assume that these comments are truthful, accurate, considered, or clearly thought through (though they may be all those things). The material in **Target: UCAS** comes from a variety of sources, most unofficial and all with their own biases built in. These different points of view give gamemasters greater scope to decide how much of the information presented is accurate, misleading, or false in their own games. This allows players and gamemasters a flexible world in which to set their 2058 campaigns.

This sourcebook turns the spotlight on three cities: Boston, Detroit and Chicago. Boston, neutral territory for years because it is home to the Stock Exchange on which all the corporations depend, has been blown wide open by a famous native son—Richard Villiers, head of Fuchi Corporation. The late Dunkelzahn left Villiers stock in Fuchi that beefed up his already substantial portfolio, to the point where he now poses a real threat to his two colleagues in the corp's ruling triumvirate. However, Dunkelzahn's will also cost Villiers his hand-picked head of security, who received stock and a seat on the board of the rival Renraku corporation (see **Portfolio of a Dragon: Dunkelzahn's Secrets**). Knowing that his colleagues will take any chance they can to unseat him, Villiers has gone to ground in once-peaceful Boston and is pulling all kinds of strings behind the scenes. As a result, Beantown has begun to explode with shadow activity.

Detroit, home of Ares Macrotechnology, virtually belongs to that powerful corporation and its charismatic leader, Damien Knight. Ares and Knight, always major players in the UCAS, have lately become so influential that just about everyone wants to take them down ... or at least knock them off their pedestal. Enemies and rivals are looking for any weak link they can possibly exploit, and are betting that the dirt lies somewhere in the Home of the Automobile. The shadows of Detroit are alive with intrigue, as different factions fight to uncover secrets—or keep them safely buried.

Chicago has been the City of the Damned ever since the first appearance there of the deadly and mysterious insect spirits. A tactical nuke detonated in the city's center to kill a hive of paranatural bugs turned a large portion of Chicago into a walled-off quarantine zone in which bug spirits and possessed metahumans, rampaging gangs and other urban predators, and a few other survivors managed to scratch out a precarious existence. Ares recently implemented its solution to the bug problem; corporate-security assault teams released an astral "disease" that attacked the bug spirits (and also anything magical in nature that uses astral space). They then declared the city "clean" and pulled out the troops they'd deployed to guard the wall. The Chicago Containment Zone is now open; those on the outside can get in, and those on the inside can get out ... .

Target: UCAS provides gamemasters with enough basic information to create adventures and campaigns in Boston, Detroit and Chicago, using adventure hooks and "story starters" scattered throughout the text. Players will find a wealth of facts, rumors, advice and warnings that they can use to arm their characters with the knowledge they'll need to survive runs in those cities. Finally, the **Gamemaster Information** section at the end of the book provides living costs, transportation information, local color and sample adventure ideas for all three cities.

THE STATE OF THE UNION

My, oh my. It never rains but it pours. Just a few short months ago, Shadowland brought you the latest dirt on rumblings in the UCAS underworld. Now here's the update on general rumblings in the UCAS—and also in the three metroplexes recently voted Most Likely to Explode Real Soon. Boston, Detroit and Chicago are all heating up, for various reasons—and as you all know by now (or ought to, if you've got half a functioning brain cell), hot spots mean plenty of work for runners. Also plenty of danger, unless you know what you're getting into before you land.

Yes, you read that third plex right. Chicago, a.k.a. Bug City. Except it's not anymore, if you believe the Ares PR flacks. The corp cleaned the place up and moved out, and there ain't nothing to contain anymore in the Containment Zone. Hopefully. The City that Used to Work is wide-open territory ... for those who like their runs *really* interesting.

As for Boston and Detroit ... well, Boston's teapot is starting to boil largely because of Richard Villiers, our very own North American boy at Fuchi Industrial Electronics. It seems ol' Dunkelzahn's bag of surprises shook things up a bit at Fuchi—and Villiers has lately been spending a lot of time and cred in Boston, his old home. Coincidence? Surely you jest ... . And Detroit's been livening up lately because it's Damien Knight's very own company town. With Knight's buddy Haeffner in office and the bugs (allegedly) gone from Chi-town, King Ares is the corp of the moment—which makes it a big fat target for all its rivals to shoot at. All this drek—plus the Scott Commission's ongoing investigation of the Big D's death—plays out in the rest of the UCAS like ripples spreading out from a rock dropped in a stream. Almost eight months after Dunkelzahn's death, we've still got trouble right here in River City—and opportunity, for the folks smart enough to take it.

For those of you who missed President Kyle Haeffner's State of the Union address to the UCAS in February, here's a transcript. It gives some idea of where Haeffner thinks the country is going, and how his administration is handling some of the problems they got saddled with. The rest of the file contains some "expert opinions" I've gathered on the current state of affairs in the UCAS—mostly intel that you won't get from the official UCAS press-sheets or any of the major newsnets. As always, if you have more inside info than we do, post it. If you have information-free opinions on the politics of the UCAS or any of the other drek mentioned here, keep them to yourself or take them to the appropriate SIG.

◗ Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 5 April 2058 at 23:11:09 (EST)

My fellow citizens, I come to you tonight with a message of hope and opportunity for the future of our nation and our people. Ours has been a time of great difficulty for the United Canadian American States. But our perseverance and our faith in a better future for all has seen us through the rough times of the past months, and we have now reached a place where the process of healing the rifts that have torn apart our great nation can finally begin. [THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE]

The assassination of President Dunkelzahn was a terrible blow to the people of our nation, who believed in the great dragon's message of hope and prosperity for our future. It is the sworn intention of my administration to see that the president's killers are brought to justice. [APPLAUSE] It is also my duty to the dragon, the person and the president I respected and called my friend, not to let his dream die. The UCAS has the potential to achieve once again the greatness foreseen by our pioneer forefathers, and to provide its citizens with opportunities such as they could never have imagined. Since assuming office, I have worked with the Congress, the Corporate Council and the people on my staff to bring that dream to life. [APPLAUSE]

As we are all painfully aware, the death of President Dunkelzahn fueled terrible conflict between the citizens of our nation. But now that violence is at an end, thanks to the courageous service of government, corporate and private security personnel who risked their own lives to help quench the flames of disorder and restore peace and calm. I am devoted to the creation of a safe and lawful society for all. I implore all citizens to cast aside the mistaken belief that violence is the solution to our nation's woes, and I invite all to help rebuild an atmosphere of peace in the UCAS. [APPLAUSE]

The violence of the past few months has pitted neighbor against neighbor over issues of race, culture and citizenship. But the ideal that all people are created equal—a revolutionary notion first espoused by our forefathers—was close to the heart of President Dunkelzahn, whom his fellow UCAS citizens saw as a good *person*, no matter what his origins. [APPLAUSE] And I now invite all to join me in renewing our commitment to this ideal, to extend that same respect to all citizens of this nation, to create a community that truly includes all of the many different people that make the UCAS what it is. To help achieve these goals, I have supported my predecessor's SIN Registration Program, which provides all citizens with an opportunity to join in our political process and make their voices heard. [APPLAUSE]

Mirroring the conflicts that have turned neighbor against neighbor in our cities are the troubles that have simmered between our nation and our neighboring states. But I have made efforts to strengthen diplomatic ties with our brothers in the Confederate American States and with far-flung Seattle and Denver, and I have worked to smooth out old differences with the Native American Nations and California. Consequently, the nations of North America are now experiencing a period of dialogue and discussion, guided by hopes of reuniting our shattered continent in a true family of nations existing in cooperation.

While we have extended the hand of friendship to our fellow nations, we have also worked to strengthen our own ability to protect our liberty against any who would threaten it and our ability to reclaim our rightful place as first among nations. And I can confidently say that our borders are strong and our nation secure under the competent protection of the men and women of our armed forces and those of our allies. [APPLAUSE]

Maintaining the blockade of the stricken city of Chicago has been one of the heaviest burdens on the brave men and women of our military. For more than two years they have maintained an airtight line of defense around the city, protecting those on the outside from whatever Awakened nightmares lurked within its boundaries, and staging daring rescue missions to extract those unfortunate individuals trapped inside.

And now, those brave men and women can finally rest. This morning I met with Damien Knight, the CEO of Ares Macrotechnology, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the governor of Illinois. At that meeting, Mr. Knight announced that Ares Macrotechnology's Operation Extermination—a military, scientific and magical operation designed to exterminate all paranormal insects within the Containment Zone—had finally been completed. Thus, I am proud to officially declare the quarantine of Chicago lifted. Once again, Chicago will be the city of Big Shoulders. [THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE]

On behalf of the American and Canadian people of the UCAS, I would like to thank Ares Macrotechnology for its service during this time of crisis. It is my intention, and that of Congress, to use the information gathered by Ares personnel and our own ongoing investigations to ensure that such a terrible tragedy never affects another UCAS city. Thank you, Mr. Knight. [APPLAUSE AS DAMIEN KNIGHT STANDS AND ACKNOWLEDGES THE ASSEMBLY WITH A WAVE]

Additionally, I am pleased to announce the creation of the Magical Security Task Force. Under the supervision of the Justice Department and Attorney General Mira Pantorelli, and in conjunction with the FBI, local agencies such as Knight Errant and Lone Star, the Dunkelzahn Institute of Magical Research, the governments of Tir Tairngire and the Native American Nations, and universities from around the world, the task force will create and maintain paranormal, astral and magical defenses for the UCAS.

The secure environment created by these combined efforts is already beginning to foster economic growth and recovery in our metropolitan and rural areas. To aid this recovery, Vice President Daviar and I have worked closely with the Corporate Council and economic authorities to promote new growth in all segments of our nation's industry. In particular, the economic legacy of our late president has greatly stimulated growth in the small-business sector, providing thousands of new job opportunities for our citizens and opening up new doors to prosperity for our nation. We pledge to continue working with our corporate allies to promote a safe and effective business environment that will benefit everyone. [APPLAUSE]

In conclusion, I would like to send a personal message to my fellow citizens, a call to everyone who hopes, as I do, for a better tomorrow for us all. I ask you to get involved in rebuilding our nation. Go out and register with the government. Do what you can to promote change and a safe environment. Support the companies helping to rebuild our economy. For if we do these things, the United Canadian American States can truly become one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Thank you and good night. [THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE]

THE SCOTT COMMISSION

by DC Insider

Whodunit? That's the question everyone's asking these days. With the official investigation of President Dunkelzahn's assassination, the Congressional hearings about the investigation, and the gavel-to-gavel coverage provided by the trid networks, there's more buzz about the dragon now than when he was alive. Unfortunately, all the media buzz and fluff contains precious few facts. Furthermore, all the investigators seem to be able tell us who *didn't* geek the First Wyrm, but not who *did*.

THE USUAL SUSPECTS

The first people cleared by the Scott Commission were then-Vice President Kyle Haeffner and VP-apparent Nadja Daviar. Both spoke before the commission and answered questions about their whereabouts and actions on the night of the explosion and the days leading up to it. Apparently, Haeffner and Daviar's testimony convinced the commission that the two had no knowledge of and were not involved in any plot against Dunkelzahn, and I tend to agree. Both seemed genuinely shocked over the dragon's death, and Daviar, at the very least, strikes me as a sincere friend and supporter of Dunkelzahn.

❶ I don't agree, DC. Daviar could just be the best actress in the world. She had *everything* to gain if the dragon kicked off, especially if the VP thing was worked out with Haeffner in advance. She also knew more about Dunkelzahn than anyone else, including his schedule and his weak spots. She definitely had the motive and the opportunity.
❶ Findler-Man

❶ The Scott Commission is taking its investigation very seriously. The commission members didn't let Haeffner and Daviar off just because they found their stories moving and convincing. The commission has at least two FBI mages (that I know of) discreetly attending the hearings and using truth-sensing spells on all witnesses called to testify. It's a total violation of the UCAS Bill of Rights, which prohibits the government from forcing individuals to submit to truth-detection methods or incriminate themselves, but the commission and the UCAS government are more concerned with uncovering the truth than respecting such legal niceties. And it is a pretty quick and effective way to find out who's telling the truth and who's not.
❶ Fed Spook

❶ The hearing room's also packed with sophisticated sensors and gear that can read a person's blood pressure and galvanic skin response from across the room. So every witness who testifies is virtually undergoing a lie-detection test without knowing it.
❶ Sabre

◗ The UCAS government shouldn't rely too much on drek like truth spells. Those spells aren't foolproof, and there are magical ways to get around them if you're good enough. Drek, the UCAS relying on imperfect spells and technology disturbs me as much as the UCAS using truth-detection methods on its citizens without their knowledge.
◗ Druid Lass

The Scott Commission is also investigating the hundreds of calls, e-mails and letters that the federal government has received from people claiming to be responsible for the assassination. The vast majority of these folks are obviously total crackpots, but the commission has to take every scrap of evidence seriously, because even the most apparently innocuous clue could lead to something.

Actually, the FBI does most of the work. The agency is in charge of analyzing the evidence and investigating possible leads, then bringing pertinent information to the commission. Besides vetting tips, the FBI has rounded up the leaders of at least a dozen or so different policlubs and underground organizations suspected of involvement in the assassination. The commission has questioned many of these individuals, but so far there's no clear evidence that any of them could have been responsible for the explosion that killed the president.

◗ The investigation also provides the Feds with a convenient opportunity to harass any potentially troublesome underground group. The FBI's already stepped up its infiltration of lots of policlubs and other "subversive" organizations and in some cases has begun to threaten groups with subpoenas to appear before the Scott Commission or to detain individuals. Any time anyone complains, the FBI simply starts making noises about its duty to "thoroughly investigate even the remotest possibility that an organization or its members may possess evidence of or may have knowingly or unknowingly aided or even engineered the assassination." Of course, the FBI agents and their targets all know it's really just harassment designed to make these organizations mute their criticism of the Haeffner administration and give it some breathing room.
◗ Desiderata

◗ It's a pretty smart tactic, too. A couple months ago, the FBI executed a search of the Illuminates of the New Dawn chapter house in DeeCee on suspicion of "magical conspiracy." The G-men didn't find any evidence of IOND involvement in the assassination, but they did get a good look at the inside of the chapter house—including lots of detailed sensor readings and astral scans and a complete catalog of all of the different "art objects" and magical foci that the Illuminates had on the premises. The IOND yelled bloody murder and threatened legal action, but they couldn't really do frag-all without looking guilty of something. You can be certain the IOND is going to think long and hard before it starts messing with the Haeffner administration.
◗ DeeCeeIOT

◗ Is anyone else bothered by these casual violations of the rights of UCAS citizens? The Scott Commission is starting to remind me of some other Congressional witch-hunters from about a century ago, the members of the House Committee on Un-American Activities. The committee ruined plenty of individuals simply by implying that they were communists, and it seems the Scott Commission is beginning to wield a similar kind of power. A growing number of citizens are convinced that anyone summoned before the commission must be guilty of *something*.
◗ Legal Beagle
"Justice cannot be blind"

But the most interesting rumors about the investigation claim that the FBI has actually arrested some human-form insect spirits and that the commission thinks the bugs might have had something to do with Dunkelzahn's assassination—possibly as some kind of payback for Chicago. Interestingly, the FBI Thaumaturgy Division seems to be doing a lot of research into insect shamans and spirits these days. In fact, the buzz on the streets says the Feds will pay handsomely for an intact insect shaman or flesh-form spirit that they can poke and prod.

◗ Seems to me like this bug thing is another example of the Feds using the assassination investigation as an opportunity to investigate other things of interest to the UCAS government without having to observe the usual legal niceties. The bugs are a matter of serious concern to the UCAS and other governments, and you can bet that the FBI and a couple other federal organizations would like to gather all the intel they can on the insect spirits.
◗ Desiderata

So far, all the interest in the assassination has proved a great benefit for the Scott Commission, but that may soon change. Millions of viewers all over the world continue to watch the live newsnet broadcasts of the commission hearings, and many of them are becoming impatient. They want to see the commission find the assassin or assassins and bring him/her/it/them to justice when, in fact, that's not really the commission's job. The commission isn't an executive or judicial body, it's a legislative investigation committee designed to confirm Haeffner and Daviar, give Congress reports on the assassination investigation and provide the public with some information at the same time.

◗ Congressional committees have never done more than provide smoke and mirrors to keep the media and the public watching what the government's right hand is doing while the other hand (the FBI and the Department of Justice) does the real investigating. Questioning people on nationwide trideo is not going to uncover the assassin. If the killer ever is found, it'll be by federal investigators.
◗ RAM Adams

◗ That doesn't mean that the Scott Commission is without power. It can still declare uncooperative witnesses in contempt of Congress (a pretty serious charge) and throw them in jail. Being called to appear before the commission can also ruin someone if the commission asks the right questions. Sometimes even just the suspicion that you've done something wrong is enough to condemn you in the eyes of the public. The government isn't going to

put you on national trid to announce your innocence, only to air your dirty laundry. And anyone who gets in the commission's way can be charged with obstruction of justice.
● Legal Beagle
"Justice cannot be blind"

● You make the commission out to be like the Spanish Inquisition. It's not. The people who make up the Scott Commission are pretty decent for government types and they're just doing their job as best they can. Why not let them do their job and be done with it?
● Fade-Out

● Because the kind of "discretionary power" that the Scott Commission has is too easily abused, Fade-Out, and because Inquisitions often get started by well-meaning people trying to do their jobs in the name of what they consider to be right.
● Legal Beagle
"Justice cannot be blind"

The lack of visible results has led other individuals to begin questioning whether the commission is inadvertently hindering the investigation or even involved in a conspiracy to purposefully cover up the truth.

● Big fraggin' surprise. I'm amazed that most of the sheep pay that much attention. *Of course* the Scott Commission is involved in covering up the truth. The truth of the matter is that elements in the UCAS government itself couldn't allow Dunkelzahn to become president, so they arranged to kill him off and put his more acceptable human running mate in the top slot. Spokesmodel-turned-vice president Daviar's just a token bone tossed to the metahuman/women voters. The so-called investigation lets them root out any enemies of the New Order or anyone else who might suspect the truth. It's the perfect scheme.
● Lone Gunman

● Cap, I thought that information-free *opinion* wasn't allowed. How about offering a single scrap of evidence for that wild accusation, Gunman? Even a little bit?
● Skeptic

● I'm willing to allow some leeway here, Skeptic. Truth is, there isn't much intel out there, so some speculation is useful. Of course, if you've got some real proof, Gunman, by all means post it.
● Captain Chaos
Transmitted: 15 March 2058 at 20:55:40 (EST)

● Not yet. Not here. But the truth *will* be known.
● Lone Gunman

● I've got something that may or may not tie in with Gunman's theory. A group of us got hired for a run by Dunkelzahn's security advisor, Carla Brooks. This was back during the election campaign. We were hired to go to DeeCee and place some surveillance hardware on a rival candidate's limo. The run went smoothly enough, but afterward we woke up in one of VisionQuest's lab facilities. Turned out that fraggin' slitch Brooks had us drugged and run through some kind of *sophisticated VR simulation of the run!* She paid us the agreed-on fee with bonuses, so we just walked away—she lied to us, but we didn't really seem to have anything else to complain about. Then, a couple of weeks after the assassination, it hit me. We had been hired to plant a small device on a VIP limo *in front of the Watergate Hotel*. So I started thinking, what if all of this drek was *not* authorized by Dunkelzahn? What if some of the people in his own organization were working on a way to geek him and what if they used *us* to figure out the best way to do it?
● Scorpio

● And who does Carla Brooks work for now? None other than Nadja Daviar. Sounds like something to me. In fact, I've heard some other rumors that seem to support such a scenario. For example, I've heard that some of the late dragon's secret shadow-ops teams had gone rogue during the last year of the campaign—but the Big D was too busy to hunt them down. I hear one or two of them went to work for the highest bidder—the UCAS itself. Who better to kill the wyrm than a bunch of secret operators with first-hand knowledge of the wyrm's twisted mind? You need proof, you say? It's staring you right in the face.
● Lone Gunman

It remains to be seen if the Scott Commission and the UCAS government will turn up any solid information about the individuals behind the assassination of President Dunkelzahn. But one thing is certain—investigators are turning over plenty of rocks and shining some bright lights into the shadowy corners, and they seemed determined to keep doing it. Consequently, those bright lights are going to make working in the shadows quite difficult from time to time.

THE COMMISSION MEMBERS

By Captain Chaos

The following information has been floating around Shadowland for a while now, so I thought I would put it all in one file and post it here. It forms a handy little guide to the commission members and their agendas. Some of these you've probably heard of before, some are new on the scene, and if I know my political animal (and I think I do) more than a few will use this commission to boost their careers. Look for them to be running for office in 2058 (and 2060, 2062, 2064 ... you get the idea).

CHIEF JUSTICE RICHARD SCOTT

For once, the politicos have done something right—appointing Supreme Court Chief Justice Richard Scott to head the commission. Scott joined the UCAS Supreme Court in 2044 and became Chief Justice after his predecessor, Malcolm Bayh, suffered a debilitating stroke in late 2051. Scott's got a reputation for legal brilliance (deserved) and political moderation (deserved or not, depending on who you're talking to). Politically speaking, he's hard to pin down.

He ended up Chief Justice by default. At the time of his appointment, he had served less time on the Court than any of his

fellow justices, which led the majority of senators to conclude that they could persuade Scott to vote their way. Political junkies may remember the Scott confirmation hearings as the smoothest ever, interrupted only by a mild protest from Senator Wendell DeCamp—"Old Ironhead," from what's left of North Dakota—who never met an anti-Awakened proposal he didn't like. DeCamp doesn't much care for Scott's consistent support of metahuman equal rights, but even he must have known he was backing a losing horse—in the end, he swallowed hard and voted for confirmation.

Some folks may remember Scott as the young and hungry lawyer who took on the seemingly hopeless *Grumman* case in 2033 and won it handily three years later—with an assist from UCAS presidential candidate Martin Vincenzo of the brand-spanking-new Technocratic Party. (Ah, the good old days, when the party actually stood for something! But I digress.) *Grumman*, to refresh our collective memory, was the case in which the Tulsa, Oklahoma school board refused to admit a troll child to the first grade—and then tried to slap the poor kid's parents with a fat fine for violating the state's compulsory-education law. The Grummans lost the first round when the school district established the so-called Academy for Diversity—a dive of a place with a crumbling slum warehouse for a classroom and a budget that didn't even provide enough money for toilet paper, let alone school supplies.

The Grummans' case looked like a lost cause until Scott got involved and took the appeal all the way to the Supreme Court. With the campaign season of 2036 turning on the whole question of just exactly what equal rights were supposed to be, *Grumman* became the Cause of the Moment. Scott rode it to media stardom, the new president appointed him to the Circuit Court, and the rest (as they say) is history. (*Grumman* may have been partly responsible for Oklahoma going over to the CAS in 2037—Tulsa, ordered to integrate its schools, joined the CAS rather than comply, and most of Oklahoma followed suit.)

SENATOR DAVID RALPH (D–IL)

Known as "Senator Safety" for his persistent attempts to restore a nationally uniform speed limit on UCAS highways, 62-year-old David Ralph has served without distinction in the UCAS Senate for the past sixteen years. He began his career as an alderman for the moderately prosperous 47th Ward on Chicago's West Side, an office he won in 2027 in an election noteworthy only for its spectacularly low voter turnout. Ralph's stint as alderman pretty much set the pattern for his career, which has been marked by his uncanny ability to win positions of power and hang on to them by simply managing to not piss off anyone important. He remained a West Side alderman for nearly a decade, distinguishing himself by devoting his energy to quirky crusades designed to offend the least number of constituents. His attempt to re-open Meigs Park as an airfield was one of his few successes. (The "Mirth and Girth" commemorative stamp for the "Great Moments in Chicago History" series was a notable failure—Chicagoans apparently have long memories, and plenty of folks didn't want a painting of a former mayor in women's undies gracing the stamp albums of total strangers.) In 2036, Ralph was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives on a "Good Riddance to California" platform. Rumors of Mafia backing hindered Ralph's campaign until the infamous "Doesn't He Make You Ralph?" leaflet, which alleged that the O'Toole Family was bankrolling the campaign, was proved to be the work of Ralph's Republican opponent.

So why's Ralph on the Scott Commission? Seems simple enough to me—he's never made any real enemies, so no one bothered to oppose his appointment. When asked how he felt about the appointment, he replied, "Ummmm ... can I get back to you on that?"

SENATOR MELISSA WASHINGTON (R–ME)

A former weather reporter for a local trid-news show in Biddeford, Maine, Melissa Washington entered the political arena after her oldest son was killed in a freak magical accident in 2046. Campaigning on a platform of stricter licensing and regulation of magical artifacts, talismans and materials, Washington initially elicited little enthusiasm among voters and seemed destined to lose. (Apparently, the voters of Maine felt they had more pressing problems than runaway magic—problems like a slowing economy and the perennial secessionist talk of joining Quebec.) Then the *Maine North Star* broke the story that Washington's opponent, cranberry magnate Dale deVere, had taken a hefty bribe from Mitsuhama Corporation in return for voting to loosen existing regulations governing corporate magical research. Suddenly, Washington's call for greater regulation seemed like a good idea. She is now serving her second term in the Senate, where she has acquired a reputation as a quietly effective coalition-builder.

Washington is the only metahuman congressman, and one of two metahumans on the Scott Commission. When anti-magic hysteria began swirling around some quarters of DeeCee following reports that the assassination may have been magical in nature, Washington, herself an elf, made a surprisingly eloquent public appeal for calm deliberation and cautioned against "a rush to make magic or its users the culprits because we find its practice unfamiliar and frightening."

REPRESENTATIVE JESS RUMMENS (T–IA)

All Jess Rummens ever wanted was a career in politics, and the rise of the Technocratic Party gave him the opportunity he needed. Aided by his family's agribusiness connections and the Vincenzo upset of 2036, Rummens entered the House as a freshman Technocrat on Vincenzo's coattails, at the young age of 29. He immediately made "the preservation of the UCAS family farm" his personal crusade (a cause he continues to champion today), even though critics frequently allege that the "family farms" aided by Rummens-sponsored tax breaks are owned by families only on paper.

Though the Technocrats have since fallen in disgrace, Rummens's friends in high places managed to ensure that he didn't fall too far. Not the least of those friends are the UCAS's agricorps, which have benefited greatly from the many agriculture-related tax breaks that Jess Rummens shepherded through Congress during his twenty-one years as a representative. In fact, Rummens has been so successful at this practice that congressmen now commonly refer to any corporate tax break as a "Rummens Special." Aside from tax breaks for agricorps,

Rummens is chiefly known for his unsuccessful bid to establish a small endowment for the preservation of the art of hog-calling.

So why is Rummens on the Scott Commission? I'd say either he's another "safe" choice or he knows where a lot of bodies are buried.

REPRESENTATIVE SARAH LYNN (I–VT)

Sarah Lynn, along with former presidential candidate Arthur Vogel and veep candidate Gary Grey, helped found the Gaia Awareness Network—a precursor to Vogel's One World Party—in 2035. The Network never really got off the ground, however, and Lynn soon became a somewhat pathetic fixture in her hometown of Bennington, Vermont. While recent law-school grad Vogel devoted his energy to setting up his career and Grey went off to bond with his totem in the wilderness, Lynn worked any odd job she could get to keep eating, while pouring ever more time (and whatever money she could scrounge) into the flagging Gaia Network. (Neighbors remember her as "that nice girl" who hung around grocery stores trying to get people to sign petitions supporting ecological referendums in which nobody much was interested.)

In 2040 she took off for Europe and traipsed around there until 2046, when she came back to the States just in time to run for the House seat left vacant by the Technocratic incumbent's death in a boating accident. Vermonters, increasingly worried about the growing power of megacorporations over everyone and everything in their state, saw Lynn's anti-corporate, pro-environment stance as a breath of fresh air, and she maintained good numbers in the polls despite her Technocratic opponent's corporate-fueled war chest.

The turning point in the campaign came during a town meeting, however, when Lynn's opponent confronted her with "evidence of involvement with European fringe policlubs." After a moment of stunned silence, Lynn replied, "Yes, I've worked with policlubs. Here as well as over there. Plenty of them are as concerned with the environment as a lot of the people at this meeting. And if you call working to ensure cleaner air and water and a better environment 'fringe' politics, then I'm proud to be a member of the fringe." The crowd gave Lynn a standing ovation, and she rocketed to a 12-point poll lead that she never lost.

Since entering the House, Lynn has pressed for various environmental laws, succeeding just often enough to keep her in office for several terms. On other issues, she is notoriously hard to predict—a "typical Vermonter, always has to look like no one's telling her what to do," as one disgruntled opponent once put it. Her response to being named to the Scott Commission? "Has to be done. Might as well be me. Next question?"

CARLA BROOKS

Dunkelzahn's former chief of campaign security, presidential advisor Carla Brooks was an obvious choice for the Scott Commission. Her former job gives her expert knowledge of security measures in general, and President Dunkelzahn's in particular. Furthermore, anyone able to earn the trust of a dragon reputed to be one of the most powerful beings on the planet must have done something to earn it, or so the thinking goes.

According to the available records, Brooks began her career as a stringer for Knight Errant. Even as a newbie, she kept a cool head under fire—her personnel file is stuffed to the gills with commendations for quick thinking and performance above and beyond the call of duty. More impressive, not a single byte so much as suggests any tendency to cut corners or look the other way. She did her job, she did it well, and she departed from the playbook only when necessary to save people from grievous bodily harm. Promoted to command level early on, Brooks earned a reputation for knowing exactly what she wanted done and getting it accomplished. In 2042, at Dunkelzahn's personal invitation, she left Knight Errant to work exclusively for the dragon.

Those who know Brooks say she was utterly loyal to Dunkelzahn. To a man, her security personnel call her the perfect commander—intelligent, competent, honest and scrupulously fair. In her few public appearances since the assassination, Brooks's legendary poise has looked increasingly hard-won; she is reported to have wept openly at the public reading of the will, when she was named as the recipient of the dagger Wyrmstooth and a cool 5 million nuyen. She has refused to speak publicly about Dunkelzahn's death; on being named to the Scott Commission, she said only that "I intend to find the truth. He would expect no less."

PROFESSOR FRAZER WILLIAMS

At 38, Frazer Williams seems a tad young to be the Director of Magic and Occult Studies at Georgetown University—but he's always been something of a prodigy. A hermetic mage, he received his doctorate in thaumaturgy from UCLA in 2043, where he studied under Aikiko Kano. During the next ten years, he built up a professional record in academia that'll take your breath away. This guy's done it all, or at least dabbled in it—spell design, high theory, practical applications, whatever. The high point of his academic career—which won him the department chair at Georgetown in 2053—was the publication of *It's All in Your Head: A Guide to Magical Disciplines*, a work of groundbreaking scholarship based on the premise that infinite variations exist within the classic mage/shaman divide.

Williams claims to have learned his most effective magical techniques not from the respected Kano, but from a street mage named Nemo in the Harbor Barrens near where he grew up. Of course, no one's been able to dig up anything on Nemo—and certain overly smart people have pointed out on-line that "Nemo" means something like "No one" or "Nothing" in Latin. Is the good doctor having us on? Well, he did grow up in Harbor, a less-than-ritzy neighborhood of LA—and he lost his home and his mother in the Quake of '28, which created the Harbor Barrens in the first place. And he did receive a partial scholarship to UCLA, which suggests he already displayed considerable talent when he started at the university. So the jury's out.

Besides playing high-ranking professor, Williams runs free classes for magically talented kids in some of Georgetown's poorer public-school districts. He also works as a volunteer forensic magician for the Georgetown Police Department, on an on-call basis. A dwarf, Williams is one of two metahumans on the Scott Commission.

GENERAL STEVEN COE BOWLING

A puzzle wrapped inside an enigma—that's the only way to describe this guy. Fifty-three-year-old General Steven Coe Bowling, Director of the CIA under the Preston Administration, has spent most of the past decade living quietly in semi-retirement in a huge house not far from DeeCee. (Military pensions can be pretty hefty, but *this* hefty? Makes you wonder ... .)

Bowling's military career got a less-than-promising start in 2026, when he joined the UCAS Army and quickly earned himself a reputation as a too-bright maverick. Young Private Bowling was enough of a wild man to get booted from the Army after slightly less than two years of service—his discharge papers are dated December 1, 2028, and after that he apparently dropped out of sight. He resurfaced in June of 2030, when he rejoined the Army. (Whether the disruption of the Crash of '29 caused the Army to temporarily lose Bowling's records or whether someone was just feeling kind, in any case the Army welcomed him back.)

Bowling seemed a reformed character; from 2030 onward, he proved to be the perfect spit-and-polish soldier. Still bright, but no longer a maverick, he shot up through the ranks with amazing swiftness. Apparently, no one ever held his checkered past against him. In 2044, President Carl Preston appointed him Director of the CIA. If anything, Bowling seemed more surprised than the public—no political animal, he was shocked at his appointment. But Preston had his reasons—among them a series of messy scandals involving former Director William Sessions III. (Billy-boy had been running clandestine operations to undermine the Sioux Nation and the Pueblo Corporate Council—without consulting the president or any of his cronies.) And so a non-political, career military officer with no public record presented the ideal candidate to replace Sessions.

Bowling served as CIA director until the Adams administration replaced him with its own hand-picked man in 2049. By all accounts, Bowling did his job well and even cleaned up the agency a little without putting too many noses out of joint. Rumors persist that at some point during his Army days he met and became friendly with Dunkelzahn, but the general has always refused to confirm or deny those rumors.

LAW AND ORDER

by SPD

President Haeffner's administration is promising "cooperation with private security providers to foster an atmosphere of peace for all UCAS citizens." He's not the first politician to use "law and order" as a soapbox and he certainly won't be the last. But here in the shadows, calls for law and order are always of particular interest because more order, by definition, means the elimination of certain "disorderly and lawless elements"—namely us.

To predict exactly what's going to happen, one must first understand the nature of the private security business. I still remember the days when police work was handled by local governments, which hired, trained and maintained their own police forces for the protection of their citizens. (In fact, I used to be on the Seattle Police Force, back when there *was* a Seattle Police Force.) Nowadays you'd be hard-pressed to find a municipality that maintains its own police. The vast majority of UCAS metroplexes contract with one or more private security providers to handle all the duties that city cops once performed—mainly because citizens and corporations refuse to pay the taxes needed to fund municipal police forces.

Now the UCAS government has found itself in a similar boat. The citizens want more law and order, but they don't want to pay for it. Haeffner has promised more law and order, but he doesn't have the police to do it; about the only law-enforcement agency left in the UCAS is the FBI, which certainly isn't going to roust gangs from the local Stuffer Shack. And so Haeffner needs the security corps to keep his promise, something that I'm sure companies like Lone Star will be only too happy to help with, for the right price.

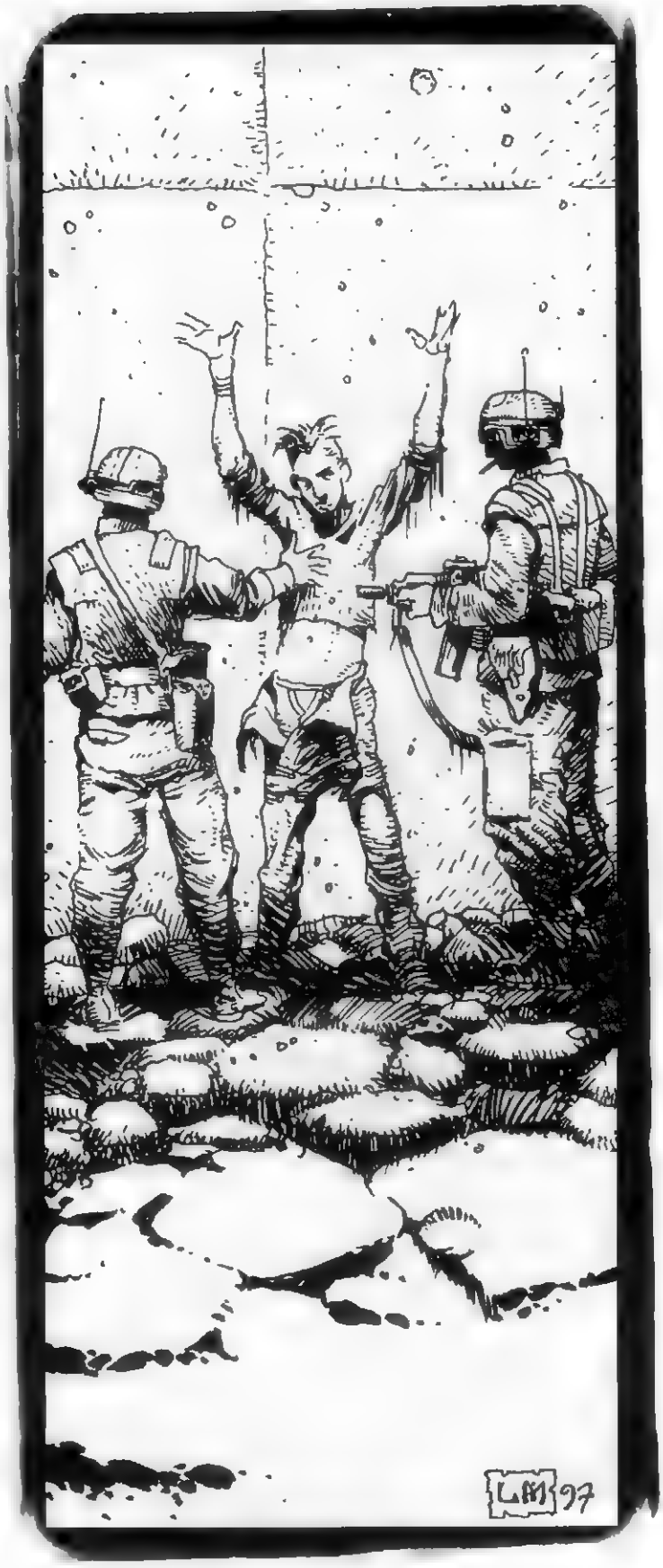
Now to carry out the government's mandate, metroplexes will need to renegotiate contracts and hire more security personnel. And of course, nowadays metroplexes always go with the lowest bidder for any contract. That puts pressure on the security providers to deliver their product—in this case, a sense of security for Joe and Jane Chummer—as cheaply as possible. And that goal leads to the creation of "Z zones," those areas of today's metroplexes that are lawless, the zones where the police don't go unless they're riding in armored personnel carriers with combat helicopters to back them up, and sometimes not even then. Every metroplex has at least one Z zone. In Seattle it's called the Barrens, in Boston it's the Rox, in Chicago it's the CZ, in L.A. it's El Infierno.

Z zones are important to security corps for two reasons. First, the zones provide a natural haven for criminals and other outcasts (like shadowrunners). Such individuals know that the government has already written off the area and its residents, and they know that the 'plex's security provider doesn't bother patrolling the place. So they naturally gravitate toward it. And that helps the security provider, which no longer has to worry about criminals spreading out among the nicer neighborhoods. Z zones make "the criminal element" easier to contain.

And *containing* crime is what the security corps want to do. They have no desire to eliminate crime, even if they could. (Ask any security-corp insider and he'll tell you, "we don't want to *stop* crime, we just want to *fight* it.") Remember, security is their product. If there's no crime to make Jane and Joe Chummer feel insecure, if there's nothing Jane and Joe need to be protected from, then there's little or no demand for the security corp's services. And Z zones are very visible embodiments of modern-day crime.

So how will Haeffner's promise of more law and order affect this arrangement? I'd guess that the security corps are going to widen the gulf between the Z-zones and the A-zones, making sure that the "honest citizens" get more law and order while the rest of us get more, well, crime and chaos, to be frank.

Take Seattle, for example. We're having a fragging Mob war here over the death of the local Mafia don. Is Lone Star going into the Barrens to clean up organized crime? No fragging way, chummers. That kind of operation is too expensive, too dangerous to the Star's bottom line. But you can bet the Star is devoting plenty of manpower to keeping all the criminals and assorted scum in the Barrens "where they belong." That means stronger "border patrols" around the Z zones and heavier patrols on the streets of other zones that are worth keeping nice.



So you can walk down the street here in Redmond with your Ares Predator on your hip like you're in the Old West, and you won't see a cop anywhere. You can even fire that Predator into the air or into a couple passers-by if you want and the cops probably aren't going to show up for a very, very long time. Of course, most of the other people walking the streets have guns of their own and there are no cops to protect you from them, either. All that stands between you and someone else taking away all you have is your ability to defend yourself.

A few blocks away you'll find the sleepy bedroom district of Renton, full of middle- and upper-middle-class apartments and condos. You walk down the street in Renton flashing your Predator and someone is going to press the first PANICBUTTON they can reach. Lone Star will be there in a matter of minutes to check your permits and haul you in for questioning. As a matter of fact, a Lone Star patrol is likely to stop you and demand your ID if you're just walking through a Renton neighborhood late at night—especially if you're wearing anything that looks like body armor or have any suspicious bulges that might be concealed weapons. I don't know about you, but my SIN isn't worth much according to Lone Star's database these days.

So, in a nutshell, the security corps seal the "bad elements" into the Z zone and tighten security around the A zones. Consequently, the people in the Z zone get more desperate and aggressive every day and the people in the A zone get more scared and more in need of the security corp's protection. And I don't think I need to remind you folks that those security corps consider you among the "lawless elements." So watch yourself. All the good targets are going to have more security than ever before, so you're not going to be able to walk through the corp sectors wearing your armor jackets and carrying your holstered Manhunters and get anything except a cell or an unmarked grave for your trouble. You have been warned.

› Pay attention, all you newbie runners. If you don't have a SIN, then Lone Star—or any other security provider—can do pretty much *whatever they fragging want* with you. Technically, they're supposed to tag you with a new SIN and run you through the system, but if you should be "shot resisting arrest," there won't be anything more than a cursory inquiry. Nobody will care. No SIN, no rights—so the company's liability is exactly zero. So if you're SINless and caught by the cops, you'd better have a very good fake ID or a real good reason why they should keep you alive.
› Daikoku

WITCH HUNTING

by MissTick

This is not the best time to be a spell-worker in the UCAS and I'm afraid things are going to get worse before they get any better. Magic-related incidents such as Bug City and Dunkelzahn's fiery assassination have created some serious image problems for magicians in the UCAS—which is good news for a select few magicians and bad news for the rest of us.

The UCAS, as a whole, has never been crazy about magic. That's understandable enough. The magical power of the Great

Ghost Dance brought the Old United States down, after all, and UCAS politicos and spin doctors have always painted magic-workers as sneaky fraggers who have to use tricks and illusions and dangerous powers to accomplish their work (unlike "real Americans," who use guns to kill their enemies). You get the idea. Just catch any episode of "Hope for Tomorrow" or one of the other corporate soaps produced in the UCAS and you'll see magicians portrayed as the oily bad guys, rubbing their hands in wicked glee over their latest plot.

Recently, the traditional UCAS suspicion of things magical has begun to skirt the edge of full-blown paranoia. Bug City is what really touched it off. Here you have a "paranormal incident"—as some newsnets called it—of incredible proportions and unexplained origin, the worst magical disaster since the Ghost Dance. Nobody's offering much explanation about the giant bugs that have taken over Chicago except to shrug and say, "It's magic, who knows?" On top of that, the good old, solid technology of the UCAS seemed helpless against these magical bugs, at least until Ares came along to restore everyone's faith that a technological solution exists for every magical problem. But you've still got some serious lingering doubts. How were these bugs unleashed on Chicago? Where do they come from? What kind of magic called them here?

Dunkelzahn's assassination stirred up similar sentiments. The UCAS government and most authorities are pretty certain magic was involved in the blast that killed our former president. Unfortunately, they don't know much beyond that. Not that an attempt to explain an N-dimensional energy transference from astral space would go over well with most trid viewers, anyway. Dunkelzahn represented the promise of bringing some "magic" into people's lives, but that same magic probably killed him.

So most UCAS citizens nowadays view magic as a serious loose cannon that can cause major disasters if left unchecked. President Haeffner has catered to this sentiment by promising to provide "more stringent controls on any use of magic or any paranormal creature that could threaten the safety and security of our citizens." It seems pretty clear that his proposed Magic Task Force will be little more than an anti-magical goon squad. And that means trouble for all of us magickers, not just the legit ones.

Conveniently, Lone Star enthusiastically supports Haeffner's new initiative. For years, the Star has been pushing for tighter controls on the regulation and use of magic in its jurisdictions, and now it looks like Knight Errant and a couple of the other major security companies have jumped on the magical-regulation bandwagon. All these corps want stricter registration and licensing laws for magicians, magical items, and especially the summoning and use of spirits. And it looks like they're going to get them. In fact, both the president and our congressmen already have demonstrated how vigilant they are by passing new laws that will allow the security corps to control the magical population in their jurisdictions "for the safety of the citizens."

Okay, I know what you're thinking (I *am* a hell-spawned sorceress, after all). You're thinking, "I don't bother with all the magical licenses and regs now, why should a few more worry me?" Right? Well, the reason why those regs should worry you is that more laws mean more enforcement.

If Lone Star, for example, is making more money off of stamping magical licenses and registering magical foci and drek, they can pump up the budget of the Dips (the Department of Paranormal Investigation) and help ensure that no shadow magicians are violating their restrictions and robbing their precious bottom line. The fact that unlicensed use of spells, foci or spirits will now earn you a heavy fine (in addition to jail time) means that, effectively, a bounty has been placed on the head of any magician who doesn't register with the proper authorities. Suddenly it's worth Lone Star's time to track down those naughty magicians and get them to cough up their fines—or to send them to jail if they don't. The money's good, the PR is good, and everyone comes out a winner—except for the magicians.

So watch your magical tails out there and be careful where you chuck your next fireball, chummers. The cops, at least, are taking magic very seriously and you could end up in a deep, dark hole from which you'll never return. Subtlety is the watchword.

● Jail sentences for magicians might as well be death sentences. Drek, from what I've heard, death would be preferable to what they do to spellworms who land in custody.

If you happen to be lucky enough to have a valid SIN, you might be treated with a slight amount of human decency. But because magicians are basically impossible to "disarm," a few of your civil rights must be stomped on "for the good of the people." Besides, you're criminal scum, so your rights pretty much end when the police catch you.

The nicest thing the cops or prison officials will do to you is make you wear a magemask. A magemask is a plastic hood that prevents you from seeing or speaking. It has a built-in white-noise generator that can foul up your hearing and even your sense of balance. If you're looking at a long-term stay (longer than a couple days), then the cops will probably dope you up so much that you'll hardly be able to walk in a straight line, much less summon up the concentration to cast any spells.

The true "hardened criminals" sentenced to serious jail time of a year or more earn the privilege of trying out any one of the "cutting-edge" technologies designed to restrain magicians. The most popular is a simsense feed that keeps your brain happily scrambled so you can't work magic. You live in a continual haze of mental static, interrupted by occasional moments of lucidity when they feed and exercise you. Lots of magicians don't survive more than a couple of years under such conditions.

In some extreme circumstances (especially if you're SINless), you may even be subjected to special medical programs designed to burn out your magical ability "for the greater good." Usually these programs involve regular dosages of stims that overload the nervous system and wear down the delicate neural balance required for channeling power. I've also heard of cyberimplants keyed to the unique brain activity of using magic. Try to call up any power while you've got one of these in your noggin and it'll blow your head off. Reportedly, a few places still use neurosurgery and electroshock to "lobotomize" the parts of a magician's brain that enable him to perform magic. Of course, no one really knows exactly what those parts are, so these lobotomies are a hit-or-miss proposition.

All very good reasons not to get caught by the law if you're a magician.

◗ Legal Beagle

"Justice cannot be blind"

◗ Of course, if you are a magician who gets sent up, your life is not necessarily over. Magicians are a rare resource, and corp and government bigwigs hate to see anything of value go to waste nowadays. So the authorities sometimes offer jailed magickers deals: "Come work for us and we'll spring you out of this hellhole" is how the offers usually go. But sign on the dotted line and your "guardian" pretty much owns you, because your sentence is technically commuted to performing "public service" under the guardian's supervision. You still have no legal rights. In effect, you're magical slave labor.

On your release, you get a new suit and a cortex bomb or something similar to make sure you stay in line and do what you're told. Theoretically, you can earn your freedom—in something like twenty to thirty years with maybe five off for good behavior. In the meantime, you'll be handling whatever magical drek your new "employer" wants you to. (And trust me, you'll be ordered to do some things you'd never want to tell your mama about.)

Major corps, the government and security providers are a few of the organizations that work this kind of scam. I've heard some real horror stories about what happens to the magicians "recruited" into the Star's Department of Paranormal Investigation. They can't be trusted with any serious assignments, so most of them end up as magical lab rats or worse

◗ anonymous@no.where.com

BUGGED

by RAID-22

Well, the UCAS has finally admitted what we all knew for years. Insect spirits exist and they are some mean fraggers. Let's go down the list. They controlled and maintained the Universal Brotherhood—a "megacorporate cult," as the media here in the Windy City once called it; they were responsible for what happened to my home town; and they were responsible for the death of presidential candidate General Franklin Yeats last year. The "news" that we have bugs is a joke to everyone who has ever run the shadows. Now Mom and Pop Nicey-Nicey, as well as the corps and the politicos, know it. Welcome to our lives, omae.

◗ Not all of it. Bugs did kill Yeats, that's true, but not the bugs everyone thinks. Yeats was killed by mantis spirits because he was working with the other bugs in Chicago. Yeats was from Chi-town, and he was under the control of the bugs there *before* Bug City went down. The mantids found out and took him out.

◗ Clean Gene

◗ I find that hard to believe. Yeats seemed quite normal and was surrounded by all manner of security. How could an insect spirit conceal itself so well from the level of magical security given to a presidential candidate?

◗ Skeptic

◗ Some bugs can conceal themselves from astral scans, I've run into a few like that. Some of the Universal Brotherhood slots seemed pretty fragging "normal" too, Skeptic.

◗ WizWorm

Haeffner and the UCAS spin doctors have played down the existence of the bug spirits by making out the recent events in Chicago to be a victory over the evil bugs. They'd have everyone believe that the bug problem is all taken care of now and it's safe to reveal the whole truth to the world. Unfortunately, the real truth is that the insect spirits are far from finished, no matter what high-tech solution Ares may have applied in Chicago.

For one thing, Ares's Operation Extermination certainly didn't kill all of the bugs. Some of them are still in Chicago, inside or outside the Containment Zone. Think about it—if these fraggers can survive a nuke placed in their home, what is some little germ going to do? I'll tell you. It's going to kill the weak and leave the strong. The strong will adapt and breed others that are just as strong—probably stronger. All Ares did was cull the herd. And then they pulled out. So what little protection Ares provided (and believe me, it was very little) is gone.

◗ Raid-22 is right about one thing. Ares's pull-out was pretty complete and a total surprise. Don't believe Haeffner. The UCAS military was there in token force only—living high on the hog over at the O'Hare sub-sprawl, protecting the airport and the "good corporate citizens who live and work there." These guys and gals are rent-a-cops in a world of automatic weapons. Ares shocked the hell out of the president when Damien Knight flew into FDC and announced they were going to pull out in twenty-four hours. That's why the president had those emergency meetings with the Joint Chiefs and Governor Carmella Colucci. The UCAS military authorities have no idea what to do. They can't defend the wall anywhere near as well as Ares did. So the announcement goes out for all the world to hear—the CZ is clean of bugs! Yeah, great, thanks. Whoever said never trust a dragon obviously never met a politician.

◗ Fro

"Leading by example"

◗ So much for Haeffner being the mindless Ares drone everyone assumed. It seems Knight'll screw over old friends for the bottom line.

◗ Alone

◗ Must be a newbie. Where have you been living? In a cave? This is the normal state of affairs for the world. Always has been. Always will be. Get used to it or you'll never survive on the streets.

◗ Granite

"Rock Steady"

And Chicago wasn't the only location to experience insect-spirit outbreaks or infestations. The bugs are everywhere. That makes the "Chicago solution" seem even more ridiculous. I mean, what about all the other UCAS metroplexes, to say nothing of the rest of the world? What's the UCAS going to do? Follow the "Chicago model"—set off a tactical nuke, wall off the area, give the press

some pap about a new disease, allow a megacorp to stand watch for awhile, and then declare the area clean?

Of course, the UCAS government really doesn't believe Chicago's clean. The folks in DeeCee know better than to think they've taken care of the bugs for good. You can bet that whatever Haeffner and his crew know about the bugs they learned from Ares and Damien Knight, who is undoubtedly holding back some of his corp's info on the things.

Word has it that the FBI's Paranormal Affairs Division has set up a team to investigate possible bug-related incidents in the UCAS. They are cooperating with Ares and Knight Errant, who still have elite teams of "bug hunters" on call, usually KE Firewatch teams. Apparently, the unspoken UCAS policy is total extermination of the insect spirits: zero tolerance, elimination with extreme prejudice and all that other drek. With the creation of the Justice Department's Magical Task Force, God only knows what will happen next.

◗ The rest of the megacorporations seem to be following Ares's lead after the clean-up of Chicago. I've heard of a couple of black ops going down inside Renraku and Yamatetsu to prevent bugs from posing as "corporate citizens" to infiltrate those corps and ops designed to keep a tight lid on territories in which those corps have strong interests

◗ Argent

That means that the good guys have the big, bad bugs on the run. At least, that's the theory. The only trouble is, I know these bugs pretty well. I survived for a couple of years inside the Containment Zone and I saw a lot of bugs in action. (They say that people who live in the CZ a long time learn to think like the bugs, simply because it's the only way to keep ahead of them and stay alive.)

They aren't going to roll over and die, that's for damn sure. If the UCAS and Ares and everyone else starts hunting them, they'll go to ground and start finding new ways to survive. I wouldn't be one bit surprised if the fraggin' bugs went public with what they are and what they're doing. I know plenty of people in the CZ who willingly worked for the bugs against their own kind. I even know people who willingly *became* bugs because they hoped it would get them power, prestige or that elusive "sense of belonging," and they thought they were tough enough to stay in control. They were wrong, every one of them.

◗ C'mon, what are the bugs going to do? Advertise on the trid? "Get possessed and you'll have a better life?" Get actual.
◗ D-Con

◗ Not that far-fetched, chummer. There are people out there who willingly subject themselves to the worst things you or I could imagine: snuff BTLs, self-mutilation, drugs—lives of hopelessness, degradation and despair. Being offered a chance to "belong," to have power and to kick the hoop of anyone who ever beat you down, sounds pretty damn appealing after a life like that. It's the same scam the Universal Brotherhood pulled, without as much sugar-coating.
◗ Grenadier

◗ You cannot know. It is exchanging cold and hunger and pain for warmth, contentment and comfort. It is trading helplessness for power, despair for hope, loneliness for a family and a home. We need each other far more than any of you are willing to admit. Why struggle against your destiny? It will come out the same in the end.
◗ Atom Ant

◗ HOLY FRAG! Cap, was that what I thought it was? Are you allowing *bugs* to log on now? I mean, I'm all for diversity, but ...
◗ Winston

◗ Unknown, Winston. For the record, the "Atom Ant" account has been closed down and we're doing some checking, but it doesn't look like we're going to get anything. Whether it was an insect shaman, a possessed person or something else making the posting, I can't even begin to guess, so watch your virtual tails out there.
◗ Captain Chaos
Transmitted: 16 March 2058 at 19:37:39 (EST)

So don't get complacent and think the bugs are gone. The authorities are pushing them hard from all sides, but they're simply pushing them out of the "decent" parts of society, out of the areas controlled by law, out of the light—and into the shadows.

THE FAMILY OF NATIONS

by People Watcher

President Haeffner's much-ballyhooed North American "family of nations" is a dysfunctional family at best. Although the United Canadian American States is loath to admit it, its neighbors have always looked on it—and its predecessor, the United States of America—as an arrogant bully, and even in the best of times relations among the continent's countries have been strained.

For example, the NAN views the UCAS as a last remnant of the hated conquerors of the old United States. For its part, the UCAS has never forgiven the NAN for the Ghost Dance. The UCAS has always treated the states of the CAS as rebels who walked out on the UCAS over the union with Canada but who will eventually see the error of their ways and return to the fold like a runaway child. And Californians certainly feel no enthusiasm for the UCAS, which tossed the state to the wolves when it looked like California was going to declare independence.

Overall, the UCAS is probably the least popular of the North American nations. But it also has strong ties—for good or ill—to all of them, which Haeffner apparently wants to tighten up. Whether or not he'll succeed is anyone's guess. In any case, the following intel provides an idea of the current state of international relations across North America—and how some of those relations could turn into lucrative job opportunities.

CONFEDERATED AMERICAN STATES

The CAS and the UCAS are like family members who have never gotten along. From the moment the southern states seceded from the Union, some people began predicting a second American Civil War. But even the division of military units and territory between the two new nations went fairly smoothly. There were a couple of tense moments during that time, certainly, but not a single shot was fired. The bottom line is that the two sides are like family members in a spat. While that may temper the tactics they use against one another, it doesn't lessen the mutual animosity they feel.

The most serious conflict between the CAS and the UCAS centers on North Virginia. When the two countries split, the secession of Virginia left the new UCAS capital only a few short miles from the border of another country—a very poor tactical situation. Proposals to move the capital of the UCAS to Ontario weren't even seriously considered, as everyone knew that the former U.S. states didn't plan to give Canada top billing in anything other than the name of the country.

A buffer zone of some kind was needed between the UCAS and the new Confederated American States, so the UCAS created the state of "North Virginia" from a section of the former state of Virginia north of Richmond. The new state wasn't very big, but it was large enough to make the boys in DeeCee breathe a little easier about the threat of a CAS invasion.

Trouble was, North Virginia didn't exactly provide the desired peace and stability. Instead, it became a *cause célèbre* for the CAS, like Northern Ireland was for the old United Kingdom. Then a couple of years ago, North Virginians began making noises about seceding from the UCAS and joining up with the CAS. DeeCee residents grew understandably perturbed at the nearby unrest. And soon some of DeeCee's downtrodden began questioning whether they might get a better deal under CAS rule. With the Compensation Army occupying DeeCee, trouble brewing in North Virginia, and most of its elite troops on duty in Chicago, the UCAS government had to call in military forces to control the rioting that started in the capital. Rumors of a CAS invasion or land grab began to run rampant, but ultimately the situation stabilized and the CAS remained quiet.

Right now, relations between the CAS and the UCAS seem to be back on cordial terms. There was a slight scare after Dunkelzahn's assassination. Some rioting occurred in DeeCee, and a few individuals claimed that the CAS killed Dunkelzahn because it feared the implications of a dragon as UCAS commander-in-chief. But the CAS did nothing but watch and wait. Thankfully, CAS leaders had the sense not to make any threatening moves. They simply waited and watched as UCAS FedPols and military troops restored order in the DeeCee streets.

After the smoke cleared, Atlanta was the first to convey condolences over the death of President Dunkelzahn. CAS Vice President Ivory McCabe attended the memorial service, and for a brief time it looked as if the CAS was willing to live and let live.

Of course, the CAS is not acting all polite and diplomatic just because it wants to get along with its northern neighbor. The fact of the matter is, the CAS can't afford to wage a major war against the UCAS right now, because the CAS has problems of its own. The country's economy is ailing and some potentially serious trouble is brewing along its border with Aztlan, especially in certain areas of Texas. It's probably a fair bet that the CAS is not looking to fight a war with either the UCAS or Aztlan right now; but if a war can't be avoided, the CAS would undoubtedly prefer to face off against Aztlan with a friendly UCAS at its back. That's the real reason Atlanta has largely abandoned the cause of North Virginian secession.

◗ The Azzies will make another grab for Texas soon. And when they do, the CAS will be forced to get help from their "good buddies" the Pueblos or from the UCAS. If they call on the UCAS for help, I wouldn't be a bit surprised if any UCAS forces that cross CAS soil decide to settle in and stay a while. Dragging the UCAS into a conflict with Aztlan could get very, very costly for the CAS if the UCAS then decides to take back its "rebel" states by force. It's hard to fight an enemy that's already behind your front lines. But the Pueblos sure aren't going to help the CAS, so I don't know that the CAS will have much of a choice
◗ Warhawk

◗ Doubt it. The Azzies have plenty of problems of their own. The civil war is dragging on and the rebels are getting covert support from the CAS and probably some of the NAN, too. The Azzies won't go for Texas unless an invasion solves more problems than it creates
◗ Pyramid Watcher

◗ Any UCAS/CAS conflict would be the Civil War all over again. But the contest wouldn't anywhere near as close. Now, I like my southern brothers and sisters a lot and New Orleans has to be the greatest city in the world, but the UCAS has a playing card that the CAS simply can't match: Ares Macrotechnology. Without a megacorp in its back pocket, the CAS really can't hold out in any conflict. And any sign of weakness on the CAS's part would encourage Aztlan to liberate more of its lost territory. Aztlan would love to have the tactical advantage of holding Dallas/Fort Worth, maybe even a section of the Missouri or Mississippi rivers. So that's another reason the CAS needs to play nice with the UCAS
◗ Bull
"The best ork decker you never met"

◗ What about the CFS?
◗ Tom-tom

◗ California? Don't make me laugh. If Aztlan decides to invade Texas, they'll probably take Los Angeles while they're at it. There's nothing to stop them until they hit San Francisco. The UCAS military simply could not defend both the CFS and the CAS from an Aztlan invasion.
◗ Warhawk

◗ Depends on what kind of resources Dunkelzahn left the UCAS with, doesn't it, Hawk?
◗ Giraud

CALIFORNIA FREE STATE

Some kind of UCAS/California reunification was a big platform plank during the election, which made some of the old hostilities between the CFS and the UCAS flare up again. The two countries are too far separated by the NAN to have any kind of military problems (as if California's so-called military could stand up to anyone, anyway) but diplomatic relations between the UCAS and California have never been all that good.

◗ Haeffner and Dunkelzahn were pretty moderate when it came to California, not like Yeats or Brackhaven. Overall, I think Haeffner has a halfway decent chance of improving CFS/UCAS relations.
◗ Bayside

◗ Keep your friends close and your enemies closer.
◗ Golden Bear

The UCAS has plenty of reasons not to like California. It's the source of BTLs and California hot simsense chips that get smuggled into the UCAS market, it's the beachhead for the Japanacorps to operate in North America, and it's home to one of North America's biggest computer industries (placing the UCAS third behind the CFS and Pueblo). On the other hand, California could bring all of its assets back to the UCAS if it rejoined the Union. The UCAS could get the Japanese out of San Francisco (maybe) and help stabilize California's crazy-quilt patchwork of government authorities.

Though the Haeffner administration hasn't done much more than make the usual diplomatic noises in California's direction, a lot of Californians are interested in seeing their state patch things up with the UCAS and get back in the Union. Most of those individuals are SanFran residents who want the Japanese out, or Angeleños who think that the UCAS can stabilize California and keep Aztlan from pushing any farther north.

On the flip side of the coin, most Californians in the disputed areas along the Tir Tairngire border want the UCAS and everyone else—including the government of California and the Tir elves—to stay out of "their land." A few of these folks think the UCAS might be able to secure California against Tir Tairngire as well as Aztlan, but most don't want any outside interference from *anybody*. And plenty of people in the California sim industry would like to keep the UCAS at arm's length as well, because closer CFS/UCAS relations could lead to a quick end to the profitable UCAS black market for California hots.

Last, but certainly not least, the Japanese Imperial Forces and their corporate allies occupying San Francisco are very much against the idea of California rejoining the UCAS, because the UCAS government would undoubtedly try to force them out of

SanFran. That might lead to a war between the UCAS and the Japanese Imperial State, something neither nation wants or can afford right now. All of which means we'll probably see an increase in intelligence-gathering in California, especially around San Francisco, and along the Tir and Aztlan borders.

◗ The Japanese have been lobbying the CFS government hard, doing their best to convince them that it's in their own interests to remain independent. Most of the politicos in Sacramento still jump when the Japanacorps say so. But there are murmurs of dissent in the ranks. I wouldn't be surprised to see California strengthen its ties with the UCAS and at least discuss the possibility of an alliance, if not full reunification
◗ Polo

◗ Let's not forget the "lost tribes of Chicago"—all the sim-flick people who moved to LA after the wall went up around Bug City. These individuals are rich, powerful, popular. Many of them still have important business and political contacts, not to mention family in the UCAS. Several of these people have already been seen pow-wowing with CFS movers and shakers, so don't be surprised if they start putting pressure on Governor Whitman to improve economic relations with the UCAS
◗ CCCampbell
"Home is where I keep my Predator"

SEATTLE

At the same time that California is making the first tentative steps toward diplomatic contact with the UCAS, Seattle is growing more distant from the "mother country." For a lot of people in the Seattle metroplex, UCAS citizenship is starting to look like more trouble than it's worth. As a result, the secessionist movement is starting to pick up steam again in Seattle.

Seattle has always been valuable to the UCAS, and so has had special rights and privileges ever since the Treaty of Denver secured the city for the old United States. Unfortunately, the trouble the UCAS has gone through since its formation and the events of the past few years have forced the UCAS to divert a lot of attention—and resources—away from Seattle.

Consequently, Seattle leaders have seen UCAS aid programs decrease in the past few years, and they've come to rely more and more on local solutions to the city's problems. The metroplex government, steered by the iron hand of Governor Marilyn Schultz, has become very good at making do with what is available to them, and also at negotiating good deals with metroplex service providers. (Schultz's renegotiation of Seattle's Lone Star contract a few years back and the deal with Renraku for an upgrade of the city's telecomm-grid systems are good examples of the Schultz administration's growing savvy.)

Adding to the problem, the sheer distance that separates Seattle from the UCAS has fostered an "out of sight, out of mind" attitude toward Seattle among too many UCAS leaders. The Matrix allows Seattle-ites to vote and be as involved in UCAS affairs as any UCAS citizen, but otherwise Seattle is its own little island in a sea of foreign nations. That kind of isolation makes Seattle valuable, but it's also driving Seattle and the UCAS apart culturally, politically and economically. The improvement of relations between the NAN and the rest of the UCAS that President Haeffner wants will further reduce Seattle's economic importance.

Lately, more than a few Seattle residents have begun to wonder if Seattle's fortunes should be tied so closely to those of the UCAS. For example, most city residents viewed the recent UCAS election fiasco as something for the rest of the UCAS to worry about. (Despite this view, Seattle experienced rioting after Dunkelzahn's demise, just like many other UCAS cities.) However, Seattle's current leaders won't hear any talk of secession. Governor Schultz has fought long and hard to keep Seattle's "favored status" with the UCAS, and she's not about to jeopardize that status—especially now that Seattle's trade with Tir Tairngire has fallen off.

But the Schultz administration may not be able to stay in power unless it can manage to reverse the metroplex's downward spiral very soon. Schultz is up for election in 2058, and it looks like the long-time governor may have finally lost her ability to negotiate the changing political landscape.

◗ Schultz isn't going to give up her corner office without a fight, and all of the other contenders will pull every dirty trick they can to get ahead. So remember all the lessons of political skullduggery you learned last year, my shadow chummers, because you're going to be needing them again real soon.
◗ OverByte

◗ And don't forget about the fraggin' big Mob war going down between Seattle's syndicates. Whichever of them comes out on top will have a big effect on metroplex politics, as the Mobs always get involved in elections to protect their own interests.
◗ SPD

NATIVE AMERICAN NATIONS

Relations between the NAN and the UCAS have never been what you could call friendly. It seems the NAN are still upset over the centuries-long attempted genocide of their forebears, and the UCAS is still miffed about losing half of its territory to some scruffy rebels backed up by enough magic to blow the tops off mountains. Go figure.

Since the signing of the Treaty of Denver, both sides have been engaged in extensive "military training exercises" and other Cold-War-style saber rattling designed to intimidate the other side, and governments on both sides have run extensive intelligence-gathering operations against one another. Despite the mutual antagonism between the two powers, apparently both NAN and UCAS leaders realized long ago that an all-out war would leave both sides devastated. Consequently, serious hostilities have never broken out between the nations.

Finally, after years of deadlock, it looks like the UCAS and the Sovereign Tribal Council are going to establish formal diplomatic relations. Some people are calling President Haeffner a visionary for his efforts; others are calling him a traitor. It remains to be seen which way history will judge the question.

◗ Haeffner's a coward to start negotiating with those Injuns. All he's going to get is a hatchet or a bullet in the back for his trouble. Or more likely, he's going to get more UCAS citizens and servicemen killed defending what's ours
◗ Rust-Bucket

◗Injuns? INJUNS? I'm going to kick your white-supremacist #*(0)_+++__+_)87klk,,,ou.....<deleted>.....SYSTEM OPERATIONS CUT_OFF (Alpha Protocol)//////////~

◗Play nice (and that means you too, Rust-Bucket)!
◗ Captain Chaos
Transmitted: 14 March 2058 at 04:22.10 (EST)

◗ Haeffner's no coward, Bucket, he's a smart politician. What the UCAS government needs now more than ever is peace, so that it can focus on settling the country's internal problems. The cold war with the NAN is a needless drain on resources and manpower. The possibility of a war with the CAS is still very real, and if it does happen, Haeffner needs to know that the NAN will stay out of it. Right now, the Confederates have much better relations with the Sovereign Tribal Council than the UCAS—drek, the CAS and the Pueblos are best buddies. Haeffner can't risk a CAS/NAN alliance that leaves the UCAS out in the cold. If the CAS and the NAN unite against something like an Aztlan invasion of Texas, they could easily turn on the UCAS next.
◗ DC Insider

◗ All the more reason not to trust them, I say.
◗ Rust-Bucket

TIR TAIRNGIRE

These days, the word coming out of the elven "Land of Promise" is mum. When President Dunkelzahn bought the pavement, the Council of Princes reacted by tightening security along the Tir Tairngire border to ultra-paranoid levels and issuing writs to censor incoming and outgoing newsfeeds and other broadcasts for content that could be "threatening to the security of Tir Tairngire."

Though they conveyed formal condolences to the UCAS government and immediately supported President Haeffner's succession to office, Tir leaders have been playing their cards very close to their vests during the past few months. Restrictions on travel and communication have relaxed somewhat, but they are still more restrictive than before the election. The same is true of immigration restrictions, and a chummer of mine says that the Tir Defense Forces conduct drills, training exercises and snap inspections constantly, maintaining an on-edge state of readiness.

So far, the UCAS hasn't had any real problems with the elves polishing their sabers and keeping quiet. President Haeffner has consulted with some of the High Princes by telecomm about events in Chicago, and Prince Ehran the Scribe has been making regular trips to Boston on business for the Dunkelzahn Institute for Magical Research (he's a board member).

◗ Oddly enough, the High Princes are still a bit put off by Daviar's appointment as VP. They've told the president in no uncertain terms that they consider her a liability to any future talks with the Tir government. You would think they'd be jumping for joy over an elf as veep, but instead they seem to be very, very paranoid. Makes you wonder if there isn't just one faction to an elven conspiracy, but many. Elves versus elves—now that would make an interesting war.
◗ Spike
"My name is my passport ... "

◗ They don't seem too happy with Ehran's excellent adventure in Beantown, either. By the city's reaction, you'd think it was the Second Coming. Ever since he arrived in Boston, he's been feted by the Hub's hoi polloi, the media's been following him round the clock, and he's been giving speeches to packed rooms of all the usual "experts," university students and scholars. I hear he's really digging the world outside the elven fairy land—which is not sitting well with the more uptight council members back in the Tir. In fact, Lugh Surehand and his allies on the council are already trying to line up enough support to remove Ehran.
◗ Granite
"Rock Steady"

The big noisemakers in DeeCee are thousands of miles away from Tir Tairngire. But the weed-eaters' neighbors—namely Seattle and CalFree—are taking the elven saber rattling a lot more seriously.

To the people in the Northern Crescent of California, another Tir invasion seems like a real possibility, and they're not going to sit and wait for it to happen. The communities of the area and the government in Sacramento have already told the Council of Princes in no uncertain terms that they will consider any military action in the disputed areas of the Northern Crescent an act of war. The tensions have also spilled over into daily life there, and incidents of anti-elf violence have increased sharply.

◗ Metahuman relations have become seriously strained all around. Orks versus humans versus elves versus trolls versus dwarfs and around and around they go. The folks in the Northern Crescent are very, very scared, and they're striking out against whoever gets in their way
◗ Q-bert

◗ I think the Tir could be in for a surprise if they make another push into California. The great dragon Hestaby stopped the last Tir invasion, and from what I've heard, she's made it pretty clear that the elves had better not try another one.
◗ MountainClimber

Seattle isn't as worried about Tir Tairngire as California, but the constraint of trade goods from the Tir into Seattle is hurting the metroplex's economy. Some Seattle residents are worried that Tir Tairngire might push north into tribal territory instead of hitting the Free State and move to take control of the Seattle

metroplex. The metroplex guard has been quietly on alert for months, and they've increased their border patrols. The fact that the NAN doesn't seem worried has most Seattle citizens feeling pretty safe, but no one is taking any chances.

◗ Of course, the restriction of the Tir border has been a boon to the local black markets. The Ancients head up the smuggling train from Portland and other points between the Tir and Seattle, and the gang is making some big bank by smuggling Tir goods into the 'plex. The High Princes are collecting some pretty nuyen, too. A healthy cut of the Ancients' profits seems to find its way into the Princes' coffers, and the arrangement also lets them avoid Seattle/UCAS tariffs. Couldn't have worked out better if the Tir had planned it, eh?
◗ Redleaf

◗ The Tir isn't interested in Seattle as anything more than a dumping ground for its undesirables. If the Princes had any serious designs on Seattle, they would have made a move to take the 'plex years ago. Right now, Tir Tairngire benefits much more from an independent Seattle to serve as a source of trade.
◗ Goat Girl

AZTLAN

Meanwhile, south of the border in the merry ol' Land of Az, things are none too merry. The Aztlan Civil War continues to draw more and more attention from the rest of the world, and the Azzies are still kicking up a diplomatic fuss over some of Dunkel-Z's posthumous pronouncements about their beloved nation.

Most notably, the dragon's will provides for huge bounties on the practitioners of blood magic—which happens to be very popular in Aztlan. The Azzies see these bounties as a slap in the face from Dunkelzahn, the Draco Foundation and the UCAS government, and they have demanded that Haeffner make the bounty offer illegal. In reply, Haeffner has stated that he does not condone criminal action on the part of any UCAS citizen, and he's promised to prosecute any citizen involved in a crime against a citizen of Aztlan. On the other hand, the bounty is being offered by the Draco Foundation, not the UCAS government, and Haeffner claims to have no legal grounds for prohibiting it. The Azzie leaders obviously don't buy his excuses, and they have made not-so-veiled threats about what will happen if the Draco Foundation sees fit to make those bounties stick.

◗ Haeffner knows that his pronouncement has virtually no effect on the shadow community. Most of us are SINless to begin with, so we aren't really UCAS citizens. That means the UCAS government can deny any responsibility for anything we do in Aztlan. Of course, Aztlan doesn't see things that way. It's possible the UCAS Feds might crack down on shadow-types to make sure nobody starts trouble with Aztlan, but it's more likely they'll ignore the whole thing and shrug their shoulders when the Azzies get mad.
◗ Findler-Man

◗ Think carefully before you go out hunting for blood mages, chummers. Nabbing one of those fraggers, bringing him in alive, and not getting yourself fragged in the process is not as easy as it sounds. You've got to get your hoop into Aztlan, find one of these skags, capture him, smuggle him out of the country and then get him to the DIMR in Boston—all without getting caught by Aztechnology, UCAS customs or any other interested parties. If you ask me, a million nuyen is still too low.
◗ Decker del Sur

◗ Yeah, and the bounties on blood mages and insect shamans aren't exactly helping to calm the anti-magician fever, either. I know at least two decent magicians who got geeked by drek-headed fraggers who thought they could collect some easy money. Obviously they didn't bother to read the "capture alive" part of the bounty. I showed them a little "blood magic" of my own.
◗ Wraith

Other drek in the dragon's will has got the Azzies in a tizzy, too. Aztlan leaders have strongly resisted allowing bunches of eggheads to tromp on in and study things like the foveae just because said eggheads happen to have a pile of money from a dead dragon. (Groups like the DIMR and the Atlantean Foundation, which want to conduct archeological digs in Aztlan-controlled territory, have received similar welcomes.)

That has led a lot of people with a lot of money to explore new and interesting ways of achieving their goals without the permission of the Aztlan government. Generally, the UCAS seems to be turning a blind eye to illegal archeological digs and magical information-gathering going on inside Aztlan's borders, but the Azzies are raising a stink about it—accusing the UCAS of mounting spy missions and secretly supporting the Yucatan rebels to boot. All of this means tighter security at the UCAS/Aztlan border. As a result, people are willing to pay pretty big nuyen for the services of someone who can smuggle them across the border without attracting unwanted attention.

◗ One other thing about Aztlan—or Aztechnology at least—that's kind of weird. Remember that box Dunkelzahn left to Juan what's-his-name, the CEO of Aztechnology? It seems Juan did just as the dragon instructed and opened the thing a couple months back during the Festival of the Dead in Aztlan. He hasn't been seen since and rumors are flying heavy about what happened to him. He still appears on the trid and in official Aztech announcements, but those appearances are just clever computer-animation jobs done with stock footage. What happened to the guy? Does anyone think Dunky's little present did the geezer in?
◗ Rio Grande

◗ From what some people say, old Atzcapotzalco (that's his name, Rio) was already dead. How do you kill a corpse?
◗ Rat Dancer

◗ If that's true, maybe Dunkelzahn's gift was life, not death.
◗ Shining Brow

BOSTON • THE HUB

Okay, okay, I know you're asking, "Cap, why is Shadowland devoting storage space to intel on the Boston Metroplex when everyone knows that Boston is the quietest, most bush-league plex in the UCAS? Boston is home to the East Coast Stock Exchange, and the megacorps don't mess with each other in the city, so nobody but the small-timers run there, right?" Time to get with the cutting edge, chummers. Boston might have been a corporate Switzerland once, but the times they are a-changin', and Boston is a-changin' right along with them. Beantown corps are already giving the local runners more work than they can handle, and those same corps are now bringing in out-of-town talent—runners who don't know the ins and outs of working in the Beanplex. That's why I've asked a few of my Boston contacts to give us the lowdown on what's going on in the Hub these days and how you can take advantage of the new opportunities springing up there. Do your homework, kids. We've made it easy for you.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 14 March 2058 at 23:28:11 (EST)

TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

by Tao Jones

The so-called Hub of the Universe (I drek you not) is a city with a serious split personality. On one hand, Boston is a bastion of old-world charm and manners, cradle of American liberty and a city of history. On the other hand, the Boston metroplex is one of the most rapidly growing plexes in the UCAS. Heart of the nation's high-tech industry, home of the East Coast Stock Exchange, the Beanplex has become a playground for corporate moguls and looks to be the next big megacorporate battlefield. Running here means running under the very noses of some of the megacorps' best and brightest, so discretion is the watchword in the shadows and in the halls of power. Keep that in mind and you might just survive a visit to my city.

HISTORY OF A CORPORATE BOOMTOWN

As Boston entered the twenty-first century, its future looked pretty bleak. The city's economy was at a virtual standstill. Unemployment was at an all-time high, which swelled the ranks of the homeless and sparked widespread rioting and looting, which the city government and state leaders were unable to stop. The city and the rest of the area seemed to be sliding inevitably toward ruin.

The turning point in the crisis came in 2005, when a massive earthquake leveled New York City. The quake rendered Manhattan virtually uninhabitable and necessitated the relocation of several key institutions, including the United Nations and the New York Stock Exchange. The old USA said good-bye to the UN without a backward glance and the UN relocated to Geneva, which it had been wanting to do for years anyway. The stock exchange was another matter, however.

The leading megacorporations immediately began considering new locations for the East Coast Stock Exchange (ECSE), a linchpin of the world's economy. Several cities were considered, but the government of Boston quickly presented a set of attractive incentives to the Exchange Board of Directors in a desperate bid to revive the Beanplex's dying economy. Their efforts proved successful, and within weeks the new ESCE had moved to temporary facilities in Boston as construction began on a permanent ECSE building in downtown Boston's financial district. The city's leaders considered the ECSE its best and brightest hope for Boston's economic recovery, and they spared no expense on the project.

● A lot of cities vied for the chance to host the ECSE, including Atlanta and Los Angeles. Boston was picked for several reasons: it was reasonably close to New York, it was already a significant financial center, and the city wanted it badly enough to give the Board of Directors whatever concessions it wanted. The city was in such crisis at the time that the government would (and did) promise the corps anything in exchange for a chance to revive Boston's economy

● Chromed Accountant

"It's all about dollars and sense"

● Rumors that the ECSE may move back to NYC continue to circulate. Considering the amount of money another relocation would cost, however, it seems highly unlikely. Of course, maintaining a credible threat of relocation helps the ECSE's member corps ensure that the city government continues to pass virtually any legislation the corps want

● Pirate

As soon as news of the Exchange's relocation to Boston began to circulate, companies from all over the world began to open offices in Boston or expand their existing branch offices there. Companies fought for office space in downtown skyscrapers even as they leveled older buildings to make way for newer, larger and more modern structures to accommodate their needs.

This wave of investment jump-started Boston's economy. In turn, the economic uptick created thousands of new jobs, which attracted thousands of new residents—many of them refugees from New York City. Within two years, Boston went from a virtual ghost town to a boomtown.

Like any boomtown, Boston experienced growing pains. News of Boston's renaissance attracted far more workers than the city's employers needed, creating considerable competition for jobs, housing and opportunities. Overcrowding also became a serious problem, as the city's construction firms rushed to meet the demand for additional housing and business space. Inevitably, Boston overflowed its traditional boundaries and gradually absorbed surrounding cities and towns. The atmosphere of competition, the overcrowded conditions and the growing resentment felt by residents unable to find work with new corps fueled growing tensions in Boston, and the rising crime rate pushed Boston's already overworked city police to the breaking point.

The corporations were quick to wrest control of the situation from the hands of the city's ineffectual government. Taking advantage of the opportunity the crisis presented, corporations began to invest considerable amounts of money in "civic improvements" such as housing and private security forces. At first the city government welcomed—even invited—corporate involvement in civic affairs, but over time the corporations assumed more and more control over areas that the government considered to be its purview, such as policing. So Boston's elected leaders tried to limit corporate control over city life—and soon learned the error of their ways.

The ECSE Board of Directors forcefully reminded the government flunkies of the city's economic dependence on the ECSE and the companies that it had attracted to the area. The board made it clear that the ECSE and its member corporations would leave Boston if the city government insisted on threatening corporate interests. In the time-honored tradition of city pols everywhere, Boston's leaders publicly protested this coercion, but privately accepted the corporate ultimatum without hesitation.

● The corporations control Boston, but they don't actually run the city. The corps don't want to worry about the daily scutwork of keeping a huge metroplex functioning; they let the government bureaucrats do that. As long as the boys in City Hall don't do any-

thing that might hurt the corp's profit margins—like passing and trying to enforce workplace safety and equal-opportunity employment regulations—the corps give them total freedom to collect as much graft as they can
◗ Son of Liberty

By the mid 2020s, Boston was thriving. The economy was in a steady recovery, industry was expanding, many parts of the city were being rebuilt and modernized, and if anyone noticed a lack of effective government, they didn't complain. It seemed like nothing could go wrong—until 2029.

Crash and Recovery

The mysterious computer virus that attacked the world telecommunications network struck Boston like a natural disaster. It crippled all the sophisticated high-tech industry in the Hub, as well as disrupting communications and other public services. Under the virus program's assault, the new ECSE's state-of-the-art computer systems collapsed. All trading was suspended at the first signs of trouble, but even so, the effects of the virus were devastating. Huge sums of money that existed solely as data simply disappeared, and entire fortunes were unmade in nanoseconds. The crash toppled Boston from the pinnacle it had reached and sent the city tumbling back into the pit of economic despair.

Recovery from the Crash was slow. With the eradication of the virus code and the establishment of the Matrix, the chaos ended and Boston's economic slide halted. The ECSE refitted its computer systems to take advantage of the new Matrix technology and reopened for trading soon thereafter. But investors moved cautiously, fearful of some other unexpected disaster. When the city celebrated its three-hundredth anniversary in 2032, Boston was still nearly as bad off as it had been before the Manhattan Quake.

The new Matrix technologies created new opportunities, however, and in 2034 Matrix Systems of Boston introduced the first commercial "gray market" cyberterminal.

◗ Most of us remember Matrix Systems because their efforts launched the evolution of the modern cyberdeck. They were leaders in their field. Darn shame that their mainframe system crashed not long after the release of their first cyberterminal. Strange coincidence, that.
◗ Cyberman

◗ Rumor has it that many of the former members of Echo Mirage ended up in the high-tech private sector in places like Boston and Silicon Valley, where they worked on ways to make their fortunes off of cyberdeck technology. Of course, running the Matrix with those crude early cyberdecks and neural interfaces permanently scrambled the biggest percentage of their brains
◗ Ben-Hur

Within a few years, Boston was booming again, and soon many of the surrounding cities and towns such as Cambridge, Somerville and Brookline had been incorporated into the Greater Boston Metropolitan Complex. Most of the towns and cities out to the loop of Route 95 were included in the incorporation—few wished to be left out, as Boston seemed to be back on the fast track to success and prosperity. The new metroplex also worked with the governments of many "satellite" areas in New England, such as southern New Hampshire, Rhode Island and northern New York State, to create conditions that would attract businesses to those regions.

The secession of the southern states and California in the mid-2030s left the newly formed UCAS without the considerable technological and agricultural resources that had belonged to those parts of the United States. As one of the major remaining metroplexes in the UCAS, Boston began to take up some of the slack. Boston had already begun to develop its own high-technology industry to rival California's, and that state's secession prompted the UCAS government, the local corporate council and the metroplex government to actively recruit firms to Boston's high-tech corridor along Route 128.

Boston's bio- and agro-engineering industries benefited from similar efforts, as the UCAS struggled to recover from the loss of major farming states. The development of algae- and krill-based food products, vat-grown protein and other food supplements—many of them created by Boston's biotech vat-food industry—have enabled the UCAS to avoid total dependence on foreign food suppliers. (However, the UCAS still must import large amounts of food from other nations such as the NAN and the California Free State.)

◗ Boston is also a leader in marine biotech and research in the UCAS, followed closely by Seattle. The dangers of the toxic soup otherwise known as Boston Harbor have forced the metroplex to start looking at biotech solutions to the problem—decades after it should have been addressed, of course.
◗ Gorton

In turn, the growth of Boston's biotechnology industry has attracted numerous medical-research firms to the area. Though Atlanta-based DocWagon remains the largest private medical provider in the world, Boston's hospitals and biotech research facilities—among the most renowned in North America—conduct bleeding-edge R&D in biotechnology, cloning, genetic engineering and biological transplants.

Boston also continues to support a thriving popular-music industry. Like Seattle, Boston has a culturally diverse population and a certain amount of internal unrest, conditions that seem to foster the creation of innovative pop music. Matrix technology has enabled musical production to remain one of Boston's great "cottage industries" and spawned the incorporation of numerous small record labels and studios where an artist can produce and distribute recordings almost as easily as a major corporate-owned label. As a result, Boston is filled with local rock bands that dream of making it big, along with producers intent on finding tomorrow's novahot pop stars.

Recent Events

Boston entered the 2050s with a vision of hope. Its corporate/government alliance had managed to keep a lid on the city's problems for several years, and the city boasted a diverse and

vital economy. Indeed, during his election-day speech in 2050, Mayor Charles O'Neil declared Boston to be "the cultural, economic and historical hub of our nation" and predicted "great things from our city in the years to come." But Boston had some serious problems that had been simmering for twenty or thirty years, and the 2050s saw most of them come to a head.

The first sign of trouble came during the summer of 2052, one of the hottest on record for the metroplex. Endemic tensions between the city's humans and metahumans, between Irish humans and Irish elves, between various ethnic groups, and between the haves and the have-nots in general seemed to rise along with the temperatures, until a rash of riots and terrorist incidents rocked the city. Security companies worked heavy overtime to contain the worst of the outbreaks throughout the metroplex, but they couldn't prevent rioters from causing millions of nuyen in damage to local businesses and companies. Though the level of unrest slowed a bit as the summer ended, frequent street violence and terrorist incidents continue to plague Boston, creating a skyrocketing market for private security contractors.

◗ Boston probably has as many private security companies as Seattle, because it contains so many sensitive and valuable assets. And plenty of neighborhood groups are now hiring private contractors to provide "neighborhood" security measures. In fact, just about any individual or corp that can afford it is hiring rent-a-cops and runners to protect their homes and facilities against terrorists, rioters, and plain old street criminals
◗ McGruff

◗ Knight Errant has the civil security contract for the city of Boston, and rumor has it that the metroplex is still massively in debt to KE for some of the services provided during the summer of '52 and after the dragon's assassination last year. Supposedly, Boston's behind on its payments, but Knight Errant isn't about to drop such a valuable contract and give Lone Star or Eagle Security the municipal security contract. (Both of those corps, along with a dozen or so smaller locally based companies like Minuteman Security, already provide service to private clients in the metroplex—and they fight over contracts tooth and nail.)
◗ Beantown Baby

◗ Some sec providers even hire shadowrunners or gangs out of the Rox to harass the clients of their competitors—thus showing the client that his current sec provider is incompetent. And certain security firms pay runners and gangs to harass potential clients, thus convincing the client that he needs the company's security services—little more than a protection racket worthy of the Mafia. For these kinds of scams, runners are usually hired to perform tailchaser runs to expose the client's security risks. The pay's not all that high, but runners are customarily allowed to keep any data or trinkets they can lift in the process.
◗ DV8R

◗ Some of the security companies also hire teams to make runs *against their own clients.* These runs are a means of "testing" security measures in a "real penetration situation" so that the sec company can hone a client's security measures. Of course, they don't usually tell the runners that it's a test and they often fail to mention that to the security people on duty, too (keeps it more "realistic," you know) So don't think you can goof off on a test run—or you may end up very realistically dead.
◗ Dybbuk

During the UCAS presidential election, just about every faction in the metroplex came out of the woodwork to support their candidates—always vocally, sometimes more forcefully. Arthur Vogel's ecological platform met with some approval, as did Brackhaven's more conservative views on the economy and the national debt. But the great dragon Dunkelzahn and his running mate Kyle Haeffner really won the hearts and votes of Bostonians, largely due to Haeffner's appeal. A Boston native, Haeffner knew his hometown well and his campaign stops in New Hampshire and Massachusetts were brilliantly orchestrated victories.

When Dunkelzahn was assassinated and Haeffner became the top suspect, a wave of rioting and looting swept the Boston metroplex. Knight Errant security, with the help of other local sec providers, managed to contain the worst of the riots by employing harsh measures. But street violence continued until newly installed President Haeffner made a nationwide trideo address and called for an end to the violence and a unified national effort to make Dunkelzahn's dream of a better UCAS a reality.

◗ For years Knight Errant was on Easy Street, because security in Boston had practically taken care of itself. The leaders of the ECSE member-corporations always made it clear that they would tolerate no trouble in Boston, and they observed a "gentleman's agreement" to keep all inter-corporate conflict out of Boston proper. That arrangement, combined with the Mafia's firm control of Beantown's underworld, left little in the metroplex to attract shadowrunners. Consequently, KE had little to do other than keep the Rox contained and bust up the occasional Mob operation they could find. But those arrangements have started to break down in recent years, and now all bets are off. Drek, Knight Errant's Boston operation has seen more action since Dunkelzahn's assassination than it did in the previous five years combined.
◗ Errant Knight

◗ Any type of civil unrest makes an ideal diversion to keep attention away from covert operations, and plenty of people made shadowruns during the rioting that followed Dunky's death—more shadowruns than Boston has seen in years. It almost seems like certain folks knew about the assassination in advance
◗ Marcher

After the dust from the assassination began to settle, Boston was a different place. On the surface, the metroplex looked the same. But the shake-up in its power structures and those of the UCAS put a serious crimp in Boston's status as a "neutral city" for the megacorporations. Dunkelzahn's will shifted a lot of money and influence around, suddenly providing lots of new opportunities to amass wealth and power. In turn, local execs became considerably less willing to stick to their gentleman's agreement. Demand for shadowrunners skyrocketed overnight, and Boston's shadow community has been growing by leaps and bounds ever since, as runners come to Boston to fill the growing demand.

THE STOCK EXCHANGE

The presence of the ECSE has transformed downtown Boston. New corporate offices and buildings have sprung up like weeds, forcing many smaller businesses to move to Back Bay or Southie. The infamous "Combat Zone" of strip joints and adult bookstores was pushed right out into the Rox.

Back in the twentieth century, when the stock exchange was still in New York, the place was a big pit full of phones and computers, with wall-to-wall brokers yelling orders to each other across the room while monitors and VDTs displayed the rise and fall of each stock—an example of order arising from chaos. The new ECSE is a lot calmer, at least outwardly. The ECSE still contains a big gallery with telecomms and display screens, but most of the shouting and dealing gets done on the virtual market floor in the Matrix. This allows many of the brokers, financiers and users of the ECSE to "visit" the market floor without ever having to leave home. The virtual space "inside" the ECSE is almost limitless, which allows for millions of transactions to take place each day.

All trading on the ECSE is coordinated by the ECSE's massive computer systems, in conjunction with feeds from the London and Tokyo Exchanges that provide up-to-the-second information on the state of the global market. The Matrix security at the ECSE is some of the tightest in the UCAS (it includes some cutting-edge experimental stuff from MIT&T). The ECSE has its own staff of deckers and systems specialists on duty at all times to maintain the system and protect it against intrusion and oversee the coordination of the massive parallel IC systems. Furthermore, the ECSE maintains its own private security force that answers directly to the board of directors.

◗ The neo-Gothic architecture of the new ECSE provides a strange and ironic contrast with the old "modern" construction in New York. With its combination of tall towers, narrow windows, flying buttresses and the latest modern interiors, the new ECSE looks like some kind of twisted church devoted to the gods of profit and greed. I really love the place.
◗ The Keynesian Kid
"Greed IS Good"

◗ Tao Jones is right. The ECSE has some of the most advanced Matrix security you're likely to find anywhere. But the system as a whole does contain certain weaknesses, which stem from the "access dilemma" faced by its designers. (For you newbies out there, access dilemma refers to the quandary faced by all open-Matrix system designers: how do you keep your system accessible to bonafide users while still keeping all the sensitive data and critical systems protected under layers of IC?)

The ECSE's designers resolved the problem by constructing a "layered" host structure. The first layer of hosts contain the least-sensitive data. These hosts have only minimal restrictions, so that users can easily access them. Next comes a layer of "buffer" hosts loaded with IC, which severely restrict access to the core systems that control transactions. To gain entry to those core systems, you have to sleaze your way past layers of some of the toughest IC in the world. Or you can disable the IC or create your own authorization code—but you'll have to gain access to the key computer systems in the heart of the ECSE building to do that, and those computer systems are protected by some serious physical security.

The rest of the ECSE's systems use timed satlinks and vanishing SANs coordinated with a huge collection of different connections that only a computer could even begin to track. Parts of the system are like a maze that continually re-arranges itself, with doors that appear and vanish almost at random
◗ Red Wraith

◗ Fortunately, you don't have to worry about all that drek (not that it wasn't interesting, Wraith). 99.9999% of the time, there's no reason to get involved in decking the ECSE's computer systems. (That other 0.0001% is jobs you should avoid, chummers.) Nobody in their right mind tries to hit the ECSE (or any stock exchange) directly. For one thing, the ECSE is heavily protected, as my brothers-in-data have demonstrated. For another, the ECSE is ultra-paranoid and sensitive to the possibility of another major Matrix crash or Nanosecond Buyout. Any sign of tampering and the entire system shuts down, and some of the best deckers in the world fly into action to track down the perpetrator's virtual hoop. I'm tellin' ya, it's just not worth it.

Making the ECSE's systems work *for* you is far easier and more effective. How do you do that? Simple—by hitting the brokers and corps connected with the ECSE. Instead of trying to mess with the data that the ECSE is putting out about a particular stock option, I can make sure that my target gets bogus stock data at his end.

Same thing for faking data that the ECSE receives. Much easier to set up some phony transactions and shells outside of the ECSE and feed false data into it rather than trying to mess with the bits once they're inside the ECSE's computer systems. As long as your data looks legit going in, the ECSE's systems aren't going to give a frag about it and you're clear.

◗ Brother Data

BEACON HILL/THE BACK BAY

Not far from the wheeling and dealing of the ECSE is Beacon Hill, one of the oldest and most prestigious areas in the city. Bounded by the Charles River on one side and Mt. Vernon Street and Cambridge Street to the south and north, the Hill maintains an atmosphere of colonial/European charm. The Hill's residents pay dearly for this charm; if you have to ask about the price of even the smallest brownstone on Beacon Hill, rest assured you can't afford it.

The Hill still contains a number of "bluebloods"—old-money families who can trace their ancestry back to the original settlers. Most of the inhabitants of the posh townhouses and garden apartments, though, are big wheels who work at the ECSE or the major corporations in the metroplex.

◗ It's interesting to note that the highest percentage of elven births in Boston when UGE first appeared were among the bluebloods. Today a lot of those elf kiddies have come into plenty of money and influence.

◗ Winchester

◗ A similar phenomenon showed up in England and Europe. Wonder why?

◗ Doctor Dee

◗ Simple, doctor. Elf babies are cute and perfect looking. All the other metas aren't. Take note of the high number of "miscarriages" as well as the increase in infant mortality due to causes like Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (which is just a fancy way of saying "death by unknown causes").

◗ Nurse Wretched

◗ Beacon Hill is really where the corporations and the ECSE are most vulnerable. Why bother breaking into the ECSE or taking on the security at a megacorporate headquarters downtown when you can break into some exec's brownstone? Odds are you'll only have to deal with a sophisticated home-security system and maybe a pet watch-critter or two. And besides, the most valuable kind of insider data isn't going to be left lying around at the office—Mr. Suit's gonna keep it at his bedside.

◗ Dancer

◗ Sorry to burst your bubble, Dancer, but it's not quite that easy. The Hill's residents have plenty of pull, so security in the area is a high priority for providers like Knight Errant and Minuteman. (The Massachusetts State House is located nearby, too, which increases the pressure on sec providers to keep the neighborhood safe.) If you don't belong in the neighborhood, I can assure you some rent-a-cop patrol will spot you within seconds.

◗ Realist

Since the ECSE moved to the city, the Back Bay area has been renovated and expanded to provide more housing for mid-level income families and white-collar workers, as well as shopping and all the other amenities of a well-kept corporate community. Living in Back Bay is generally a status symbol for up-and-coming corporate types—not as hot as Beacon Hill, but definitely on the track to the top. Consequently, Back Bay is starting to see some of the same kinds of shadow action as the Hill, only for smaller stakes and less trouble (usually).

The area, along with Cambridge, is also home to some of the city's best nightclubs and bars, numerous small theaters, shops and quiet parks. The Back Bay's quaint atmosphere is carefully maintained by Knight Errant, in cooperation with a number of "tenant protection associations" that have sprung up. These groups charge membership fees, which are used to hire private security (often additional Knight Errant personnel) for the members' neighborhood to keep out "undesirables" and keep the residents safe.

Back Bay is also home to the Prudential Center, a large business complex that occupies several city blocks. The center was expanded after the ECSE relocation and provides additional office space to several smaller corporations. As with just about everyplace else in Back Bay, security at the center is top rate.

ROUTE 128

North of the downtown area and Cambridge, on the outer edge of the metroplex proper, Route 95 becomes Route 128. This stretch of highway holds more high-tech businesses and corporate offices than any other area in New England, and possibly in the UCAS. From small cottage-industry start-ups to AAA megacorporations, hundreds of different companies are represented in the space of just a few miles.

Since the relocation of the stock exchange and the loss of California's Silicon Valley, Route 128 has become vitally important to UCAS high-tech industry. The corporations in the area support the Matrix and information technologies so vital to the UCAS economy, and they fight to stay on the cutting edge in Matrix technology. From the microchips that go into every piece of electronics in the world to the massive Matrix hosts used by multinational corporate clients, the companies in this district provide it all.

That doesn't mean the area is limited to computer corps, however. The 128 strip also contains office parks and technology centers for companies that specialize in biotechnology, cybertechnology and a variety of other goods and services.

The high concentration of corporate assets in Route 128 makes the area a prime target for Beanplex shadowruns. Security is tight, however. The tenant corporations make use of every available security option, from special landscaping to the latest magi-

cal, biological and electronic countermeasures. Every corp facility is technically extraterritorial—and therefore not subject to UCAS or Boston law—so the corps here don't hesitate to deploy the most lethal technology they can find to keep shadowrunners away from their precious secrets. Despite these measures, Boston runners regularly target corp facilities along Route 128 in datasteals, extractions, plants, sabotage, espionage and more—and this shadow activity is showing no sign of slowing down any time soon.

◗ Not *all* corporate shadowruns in Boston revolve around the 128 area. There are plenty of corporate facilities downtown with swag that Johnsons are willing to pay for, and there are companies as far away as southern New Hampshire that have data or personnel worth a shadowrun. Don't limit yourself by concentrating too hard on one area of opportunity.
◗ Vectra

◗ Anyone contemplating work in the Beanplex should keep in mind that corporate-sponsored runs here tend to be more hush-hush than operations in places like Denver or Seattle. In Boston, everyone likes their shadowrunners to *stay* in the shadows; if a targeted corp can find out who hit them without reading your Johnson's memoirs, your work is considered sloppy. The corporations here like to maintain the illusion that Boston is a shadowrun-free safe zone (if only to lull others into a false sense of security). That doesn't mean every Johnson has unrealistic expectations of what can be accomplished, but they have expectations nonetheless—and a runner who wants to work regularly in Boston should keep that in mind.
◗ Logan

RICHARD VILLIERS

Richard Villiers spends most of his time in New York or Tokyo these days, but the Fuchi CEO remains a favorite son of the city of Boston. Villiers hails from Beantown, and the city is near and dear to him (or so says his latest interview in *Fortune*). In fact, the city is nearer and dearer to our Richie Rich than most people thought. I recently dug up some data that suggests Villiers is quietly establishing a power base in Boston, a personal empire outside of Fuchi's control. Possible reasons for this are legion, but one thing is almost certain: conflicts within Fuchi are more serious than anyone suspected. If they weren't, he wouldn't be bothering with building his little nest. Ten to one, Villiers is preparing for the worst.

◗ That's the understatement of the century. Right now, Villiers is as close to having a one-man lock on control of Fuchi Industrial Electronics as anyone has ever gotten. For those of you not in the know, Fuchi has always been split between the three founding "families" that established it: the Villiers, the Yamanas and the Nakatomis. They each control roughly a third of the megacorp, and each one would love to have control of the whole thing. But the three factions have always maneuvered to ensure that no single family gains too much power

Dunkelzahn's will handed Villiers an additional chunk of Fuchi stock, which considerably increased his power among the three families. If he pushes too hard or too fast, an intra-corporate war between the three camps might erupt—and I'd bet Villiers would come out on top in a conflict like that. There's a huge risk it'd blow up in his face, but he might decide the potential payoff is worth it.
◗ Blaze

Most of Villiers's Boston-area investments are small companies or slices of bigger pies concealed behind mazes of shell corporations and holding companies. I have no idea how far his holdings extend, but I can say that Villiers most likely has controlling interest in Minuteman Security, investments in some smaller corps such as Manadyne, Visionary Design Works and Mandala Technologies, a bulging personal stock portfolio, and his Fuchi holdings—newly swelled by the late Dunkelzahn's bequest.

Villiers has a reputation as a sharp corporate operator who has been able to navigate between the Nakatomis and the Yamanas for years without losing ground—in fact, he's actually managed to gain some. With the additional control over Fuchi that Dunkelzahn's bequest gave him, Villiers is in a position to do some real house-cleaning within the megacorp and finally see everything go his way. That idea, of course, has both the Nakatomis and the Yamanas scrambling for new power bases and schemes to hang on to the influence they've got.

Meanwhile, Villiers continues to build his little empire behind the scenes. Some observers claim he plans to use this outside power base as a staging ground for some initial attempts at bringing Fuchi under his complete control, but no one knows for certain. With shake-ups going on in Fuchi and Renraku, you can bank on seeing more action from both corps in Boston and elsewhere, as the execs fight among themselves for the top spots on the corporate totem poles.

◗ Careful with this drek, chummers. Internal corporate runs can be some of the nastiest. They say nobody fights as viciously as family does, and that goes double for different branches of the same corp. Competing execs always seem to know their enemy's weak points better than anyone, and they go right for the kill. If you're not careful about doing your homework and knowing what you're getting yourself into, you can end up twisting in the wind because some corporate faction considered you disposable. Take my word, these kinds of runs can make or break a runner.
◗ Argent

◗ Villiers has a lot of aces up his sleeve, especially if he's been cultivating assets outside the Fuchi structure. (In which case you can bet the other camps have been doing the same, probably in their own backyards in Europe and Asia.) One wild card in the deal is Miles Lanier, the former head of Fuchi Internal Security. Lanier was probably one of the closest things to a friend that a man like Villiers could have, and he was a major asset for Fuchi—he pretty much wrote the book on corporate security procedures

What happened? In one of the weirder twists of Dunkelzahn's will, Lanier got a huge whack of Renraku stock and a position on the board, a fraggin' serious step up from where he was. From what I heard, tensions ran pretty high for the first week or two while everyone went nuts wondering just what Lanier was going to do. Ultimately, he resigned from Fuchi and packed off to Renraku. That sent Villiers's people scrambling to change all the locks before Lanier

could use what he knew to help out the competition. So far, it doesn't look like that's happened, but with what Lanier knows of Fuchi's security ops, he could direct some crippling operations for Renraku.

◗ CC Raider

◗ Not going to happen, chummer. Renraku execs don't trust Lanier farther than they can throw him. Word is that Yuki Watanabe—Slitch Queen of the Renraku board—tried to have Lanier killed, but the assassin was no match for Lanier's massive personal paranoia and skill in security operations. As much as Fuchi is worried that Lanier will sell them out to Renraku, Renraku is ten times more worried that Lanier is a plant and still loyal to Villiers. If Lanier manages to live another six months, he *might* get access to some of Renraku's real activities. For now they're probably blowing all the smoke they can to keep him in the dark.

◗ Daikoku

◗ I don't know what side Lanier is loyal to either, but I do think Renraku is really twitchy about something more than a shake-up on the board of directors. Renraku seems to be ever-so-gently diverting a lot of resources here and there for some reason I haven't been able to piece together. If I had to guess, I'd say it has something to do with Renraku's fabled and ill-fated artificial intelligence project. The corp has stepped up its recruitment of novahot programmers and designers from MIT&T as well as Japan. Sounds to me like Renraku's on the cusp of a big tech breakthrough and doesn't want Fuchi fragging with it.

◗ E-Male

◗ What a waste. The Renraku AI project is a total dead end—has been for almost ten years now. From the sound of it, the board is this close to pulling the plug on the whole thing and writing it off, and only the charismatic persuasion of Sherman Huang and Inazo Aneki have convinced them to wait.

◗ Pixel Pusher

So what does this all portend? I'd say we're likely to see Villiers stepping up acquisitions in the Boston area and securing some of his already purchased assets against attack from inside and outside; hostile takeovers through different shells and blind alleys that might be aided by a strategically timed shadowrun; efforts by other corps or other Fuchi factions to ferret out more intel on Villiers' assets and plans; and maybe some efforts by Villiers to siphon off useful resources from his little corps to benefit some Fuchi operation that could give him more leverage against the Nakatomis and the Yamanas.

For Renraku, I predict some attempts by Lanier to find himself some better footing with the corporation and maybe worm his way into data on some of Renraku's big secret projects. Lanier knows his value and I think he'll do his best to make himself an asset to the corporation if he's planning to stay—or get as much intel as he can to take with him before he bolts. Either way, Renraku is likely to step up internal security, if it hasn't already, and some of the corp's divisions and bigwigs are likely to get into some nasty infighting.

THAT OL' BLACK MAGIC

by Raven

Hoi, all, and blessed be. Cap'n Chaos decided to make me his "expert du jour" on the subject of magic in the Boston area, and I'm certainly happy to add my two nuyen to the whole combo—if only to eliminate some of the weird stereotypes you left-coasters get about magickers (though with the spell-slingers you've got out there in Seattle and the CFS, it's no surprise).

There's a lot of magic going on in Boston, but like a lot of things in the plex, it goes on under the surface and behind the scenes. Manadyne, the world's biggest second-tier magical corp, is based in the metroplex and there's also the bleeding-edge magical research going on at places like the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Thaumaturgy (MIT&T). Add to that the witches of Salem, the magical orders and associations in the city proper, and the newly established Dunkelzahn Institute of Magical Research (DIMR), and you've got a lot of magicians.

That means lots of new magical theories, spell designs, rituals and other magical data, as well as plenty of competition for magic info and other assorted stuff that spell-slingers use. So runners might find jobs snatching magical research data or even talismans and other material that a Johnson wants. Extractions of talented magical researchers and theoretical occultists are pretty likely, too. You may encounter some serious mojo on these kinds of runs, so prepare accordingly.

And of course, a good spell-tosser can always find a job in the Boston shadows.

Magical practitioners in the Beanplex break down pretty much into city mice and country mice. The magicians in the metroplex proper tend toward the hermetic side of things, and Boston boasts some of the most gifted spell-casters and magical theoreticians in the UCAS. Out my way, most of the Talented tend to follow natural magic of one kind or another, such as the Craft of the Wise—Wicca, or Witchcraft, as it's more commonly known—which is the path I follow. There's some crossover between the two, but generally speaking you'll find mages in the metroplex and witches out in my hometown of Salem and the surrounding area.

What about shamans, you ask? Well, a lot of us witches practice shamanistic-type magic, but we're pretty far away from the Native American Nations and all their shamanic trads. That doesn't mean we don't have shamans out here, only that they tend to be few and far between by comparison. The few we do have are tied up in some of the drek that's been going on in and around the area for a *long* time, bad mojo that makes a lot of local shamans twisted fraggers to watch out for. More about them later.

MIT&T

If there is a magical center to the Boston Metroplex, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Thaumaturgy (MIT&T) in Cambridge is it. Situated across the Charles River from downtown Boston, Cambridge is still really an avant-garde college community at heart, home to two of the finest universities in the UCAS: MIT&T and Harvard.

The MIT&T campus hugs the banks of the Charles River and produces some of the metroplex's finest technical personnel.

Considered one of the top ten universities in North America, the Institute (as its students call it) is the jewel of Boston's educational and economic system. And MIT&T's prestige and importance to Boston has grown along with the local corps' need for skilled technical personnel. Understandably, the local corporations and government do all they can to support the school.

MIT&T leads the field in computer science, robotics, cybernetics, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, hermetic studies, and a celebrated—albeit tiny—shamanic studies program. The magical studies programs are small by comparison to MIT&T's science and engineering programs, but few universities offer accredited magic programs even in these Awakened days, and almost no other school with MIT&T's reputation offers them.

Several faculty members are Nobel prize winners and the screening process for students is tough. Most of the students accepted at MIT&T are sponsored by corporations, with the agreement that they will work for their sponsoring corps after they graduate. Other students hail from wealthy families or manage to obtain scholarships. (I earned my B.A. in Thaumaturgy from MIT&T on a scholarship. Surprised? Now you know why Cap thought I could handle both sides of the coin).

In addition to having one of the top five hermetic libraries in North America, the MIT&T Thaumaturgy department also has some extensive conjuring facilities (with lots of space for elaborate circles), an alchemy lab, warded lecture halls (in case of accidents) and even an on-campus lorestore that sells magical supplies for classes.

Most of the thaumaturgy students tend to congregate together and live in their own dorms. The school also supports four full-fledged magical working groups, last I knew: the Order of the Crystal Moon, the Fellowship of Isis, the Faustus Society and the Cambridge Circle Grove. The groups are somewhere between serious initiatory groups and magical frat houses, and each of them includes both students and faculty members. The Order and the Fellowship are the two oldest and stuffiest. The Faustus Society is mostly hip mage-types who are only a whisper away from being street mages. (The Faustians go in for the "spooky" and "wicked" look, and have taken the devil-summoning Dr. Faustus from Marlowe's play of the same name as their patron.) The Circle Grove is a small group of MIT&T nature magicians, neo-pagans and shamans. Unlike the other three groups, the Circle Grove includes mundane members as well. Talented members are a minority in the Grove, but they don't discriminate. I still keep in touch with some of my friends from the Grove and see them from time to time.

MIT&T does a lot of work with local corporations, like it or not. The corps sponsor nearly all of MIT&T's big-time programs, and in return MIT&T serves as a testing ground for new ideas and cutting-edge advances, as well as a spawning ground for corporate wizkids who plan to hook up with some big R&D department after they graduate. That means security at MIT&T is pretty tight in general and extraordinary in certain places. Lots of Matrix and magical security measures were created here, and new ones are always being tested. Various corporations (especially the Big Three computer corps) have different projects and research going on, and do their very best to protect their interests.

● MIT&T faculty and students get into the absolute cutting edge of magic and tech. Some of their drek gets pretty weird. If you're hired to do something there, whatever you do, don't go wandering around. You never know what's lurking in that lab around the corner
● Talon

● Shadowrunning against a school like MIT&T stems from the philosophy of "get 'em while they're young." A lot of corporate R&D projects get started at schools and universities, so it's often a good idea to try to snag the trade secrets before the parent corporation can get its new discovery or new wizkid safely behind corporate security on company property where corporate law applies
● Whisp

● An interesting little factoid about MIT&T: the Illuminates of the New Dawn (remember them?) have recently been recruiting on the grounds of the campus, and some of MIT&T's faculty and most promising students in the hermetic studies program have signed on as members of the order. Seems the Illuminates have been promoting the idea of their group as a kind of "old mages network" that can help people get ahead in their chosen careers, and have been making nebulous promises about ancient magical secrets and initiation into the inner mysteries of magic. The recruit-

ment is cutting into the membership of the four magical orders at the school, but there isn't a whole lot they can do about it.
◗ Sojourner

HARVARD

Farther inland from MIT&T lies the campus of Harvard University. Harvard's business programs turn out many execs and managers that hold the top jobs in the Boston megacorps, as well as in corporations throughout the world.

◗ The "old boys network" based around the Ivy League schools is still alive and well, too—although it includes a fair number of "old girls" these days as well. Big league suits in some of the megacorporations stay in touch with their old college chums and use those contacts when they need to get ahead. Sometimes a suit can have some surprising contacts outside of his corporation's usual circles, based on the people he knew in his student days.
◗ School Ties

Generally, Harvard University focuses more on the liberal arts than MIT&T and turns out some big-time achievers in UCAS business, law, medicine, politics and education. The school is heavily supported by corporate donations and serves largely as a training ground for new corporate suits to climb their way up the ladder to success. The university's MBA program always has a waiting list and very strict requirements that can only be bent with the application of considerable amounts of cash.

Harvard has magical studies and computer science programs as well, but they just aren't on par with MIT&T (call me biased). A wagemage from Harvard probably has a stronger grounding in "the classics" and knows how to cast spells in Latin, but is probably better suited to managing an ivory-tower magical R&D department or division than wading in and handling the dirty work. Same goes for a computer science grad; strong emphasis on management and fast-track advancement rather than front-lines dirty work or behind-the-lines design work. There are exceptions on both sides, of course.

◗ The computer-science programs at MIT&T and Harvard also have a "friendly rivalry" going. Though it has yet to reach the level of the "mage wars" in CalFree, it has come close on occasion. Traditionally, students in both programs must break into the other school's computer system before they graduate and provide some proof of their having done so. Some of the more spectacular pranks related to this tradition include the distribution of obscene photos of a Harvard dean in the Harvard alumni newsletter, and the MIT&T students' successful campaign to convince the Harvard computer-science department that they had inadvertently created an AI in the Harvard system.
◗ Tesseract

THE DUNKELZAHN INSTITUTE OF MAGICAL RESEARCH

Board of Directors: Thomasin Martyn (Oxford Royal College of Magicians, chairperson), Dr. Edward Oden (University of Chicago), Ehran the Scribe (Tir Tairngire), Malcolm Grant (MIT&T), William Casey (Atlantean Foundation), Walks-with-the-Wind (Native American Nations), Cormac McKilleen (Tir na nÓg), Louisa Rhine (CalTech), Chandra Patel (UCLA), Juliana Merton (People's University of Berkeley), Eva Vukovic (the Lagenzell Institute), Tamara Nimbus (Loyola), Felipe Rodriguez (University of Southern California)

The Dunkelzahn Institute of Magical Research (DIMR) is the newest kid on the block in the magical circles of Boston. DIMR was established with funds from the late dragon's estate and given a mandate to study the secrets and mysteries of magic in the Sixth World. To carry out this task, the DIMR has been provided with some of the finest magical minds in the world and resources that rival those of any of the major corporate magical think tanks—as well as the resources of the DIMR's closest rival, the Atlantean Foundation.

The DIMR's directors have already made it clear that they consider the Atlantean Foundation a bunch of cranks trying to prove fantasies of a magical lost world, rather than an organization involved in serious magical study. The Atlanteans haven't offered their opinion of the DIMR as yet, but considering that one of the DIMR's board members is a member of the Foundation, things could get interesting.

◗ I'll say. William Casey, the Atlantean Foundation representative on the board, is a real cipher. Officially speaking, Casey didn't exist until 2051, when he opened a talismonger's shop on the edge of the Atlanta suburb of Decatur, just a few blocks from Emory University. Rumor has it that a large amount of Casey's money was made through the acquisition of "unique" magical goods for his shop's customers. Casey is a capable mage and I've heard that he may have run with a wizzer-gang during his wayward youth.
◗ South Bend

◗ The board of directors is surprisingly unified for such a diverse group. Professor Martyn was a surprise choice to chair it—I had Ehran pegged as chairman, but apparently the prince politely declined and nominated Martyn, a suggestion that met with unusually easy acceptance. Martyn is 65 years old and has had a long and illustrious career in England and Wales. She joined the Reformed Druidic Movement in England in her twenties and became dean of St. Hilda's College in 2055. She's published several important papers on magical theory, particularly on the subject of restoring "blank" areas of astral space (such as the foveae in Aztlan), and she is a surprisingly charismatic and capable administrator
◗ Mage-lk Man

After much consideration, the DIMR directors named in Dunkelzahn's will chose to set up shop in Boston. Naturally, each board member wanted to locate the DIMR in his or her own domain. However, the Draco Foundation frowned on the idea of locating the DIMR facilities outside the UCAS. Eventually, the board members decided on a site near MIT&T, which would enable the two institutions to share resources.

◉ DIMR projects break down into two broad groups: theoretical studies (lab work, research and think-tank drek) and practical field work, usually studies of magical phenomena such as the magical storms in Tir na nÓg, the manastorm in DeeCee, the Mojave and the astral damage in Los Angeles. Word has it that the DIMR is going to petition the Aztlan government for permission to study the foveae based on some of Martyn's theories, and we just know the Azzies will tell them to frag off. Other field projects include studies of archeological sites (probably in search of manalines and ancient power loci), field studies of different critters and spirits, and astral exploration. If anyone's interested, the DIMR usually hires "field operatives" to help ensure that its eggheads don't hurt themselves during expeditions; and some of the theoretical study results might be worth something to the right buyers.
◉ Arkane

◉ Wouldn't be at all surprised to see some shadowy skullduggery coming from the members of the board itself. It's a well-known fact that Patel and Rodriguez are long-time rivals. Neither of them is crazy about the DIMR being so near MIT&T (they both lobbied for California, but nobody else would even consider it), Merton doesn't much like either of them and the feeling is mutual. On top of that, Ehran and Cormac McKilleen are plenty civil to each other on the surface, but everyone knows that their respective nations barely get along
◉ Ganzfeld

◉ Dunno about that, Ganz. The board members seem surprisingly devoted to the pursuit of magical knowledge for its own sake and seem to have set aside a lot of their differences. It may be Martyn's direction or respect for the late Dunkelzahn, but so far there hasn't been a lot of conflict. Of course, they could just be keeping their arguments private for appearances
◉ MissTick

◉ Just for the record, the DIMR does *not* answer to the Draco Foundation. Its funding is independent and controlled by the DIMR board. In fact, there hasn't been any real communication between the two organizations since the Draco Foundation officially handed over control of the money to the DIMR
◉ Toady

◉ A lot of shadowrunners and "freelance consultants" have recently been hired to do some magic-based, difficult, strange and very involved work—archeological expeditions into dangerous territory, safaris to acquire rare and dangerous critters, drek like that. Not illegal, maybe borderline, but definitely not something you want on the books. Word is it's the DIMR working the shadows. But it doesn't just stop there. Rumors persist that the DIMR may have some black ops going on as well—datasteals and runs against the Atlanteans and the Illuminates of the New Dawn. I bet the DIMR would *really* like to get an inventory list of some of the goodies those folks have stashed away. They haven't contacted anyone I know (or if they did, they're doing a real good job of making sure Mr. J doesn't spill what he knows), but I'll keep you all posted if I get proof
◉ Silver Fae

THE WITCHES OF SALEM

The town of Salem was little more than a colonial seaport when the famous witch trials took place there in the seventeenth century. The reality behind the witch trials—were they the result of three hysterical girls and a repressive culture or of a manifestation of genuine pre-Awakening magic?—continues to fuel academic debate today. In any case, the trials led to Salem's long-lasting association with witchcraft.

By the mid-twentieth century, Salem had established a small tourist industry centered on relics and re-enactments of the witch trials, as well as the town's renowned Witch Museum. Followers of the nascent neo-pagan witchcraft movement also began to settle in Salem and were welcomed by Salem's residents, who recognized that the presence of the modern-day witches provided a considerable boost to the town's tourism industry. Additionally, several talismonger shops opened to serve Salem's new witch community, bringing in new income that benefited the entire town. Unlike the townspeople of three centuries earlier, Salem's modern inhabitants learned to appreciate the witches and live with them. In fact, Salem even redesigned its town seal to include a broom-riding witch silhouetted by a full moon.

◉ Some of the witches today are touchy about it, too. They believe the "old crone on a broom" image reinforces anti-witch prejudice and ugly stereotypes, and some people have made noises about changing the seal. But it's nothing more than a tempest in a teapot, if you ask me.
◉ Roan

As the twentieth century drew to a close, the witchcraft revival really began to blossom, and new students and seekers flocked to Salem. The movement also began to attract attention from the mainstream media, which started broadcasting frequent reports and news specials on the "magical powers" of the witches, their ceremonies, and their advocacy of ecological conservation and Native American rights.

◉ The United States government reportedly kept tabs on the more radical and influential members of the witch community, out of concern that sympathizers would aid the cause of the SAIM.
◉ Samantha

Shortly after the turn of the new century, reports of strange paranormal phenomena around Salem began to increase. (Several prominent witches had already made predictions about an impending "time of planetary change," but even these individuals had no idea of the real nature of the coming Awakening.) The most spectacular of these paranormal phenomena occurred in 2011 on Halloween, when the witches of Salem traditionally held public rituals to celebrate Samhain—the Celtic New Year and the time when the power of witchcraft is at its peak.

On that night, a heavy fog covered the ground as the witches' circle gathered on Salem's Mystery Hill and began a ritual calling on the spirits of the Otherworld. At the height of the ritual, a horn blast cut through the still and cold night, followed by the sound of galloping hooves. Out of the mist rode a group of ghostly horsemen, led by a dark figure crowned with stag antlers astride a black steed and a dark-haired, pale-skinned huntress attended by a pack of spectral hounds. The riders circled the assembled witches three times, then vanished back into the mist.

Several of the witches collapsed and were taken to the local hospital, where they were treated for various disorders including migraines, bruising, unexplained wounds and burns and even one stroke. (The stroke victim died soon after admission.) The attending physician had no explanation for the rash of injuries, apart from her speculation that the stress induced by the strange apparition caused them.

◗ Of course the doctor couldn't explain the injuries. The witches at that circle suffered the classic symptoms of channeling more magical power than is safe to handle, and an early twenty-first-century doctor would have no idea about such things. Obviously, the witches' ritual—designed to honor the spirits of the dead and bring justice to those in need—stirred the growing power of the Awakening and summoned forth the Wild Hunt. The single death was not accident, for all who call on the power of the Hunt must pay in blood.

◗ Labrys

◗ Impossible! A ragtag group of human witches practicing herbalism and midwifery could not have summoned the Wild Hunt. Only true practitioners of the Arts, those who follow the Ways and the Paths—the true Tuatha DeDannan—possess the ability.

◗ Ovate

◗ Believe what you like, elf boy. The Lord and Lady of the Hunt know the truth.

◗ Labrys

◗ Want to know something else interesting? The following November, U.S. military police investigators began trying to track down the killer of one Colonel Edward Hildebrandt, a resident of the Salem area. Hildebrandt's body was found in the woods not far from his home. It was torn apart, as if by some pack of wild animals. The Army suspected that Hildebrandt had been killed by

SAIM terrorists or sympathizers, but they never found any evidence to prove it. Eventually, Army investigators marked the case "unsolved" and filed it away. The interesting part? Hildebrandt was a commanding officer of one of the UCAS's Native American re-education camps. He had been home on leave when he initially disappeared—on Halloween Night.

◗ Blackthorn

When the great dragon Ryumyo was sighted in Japan at the end of the year, the world at large realized that a new age of magic had dawned, and the witches of Salem gained new respect. The general public no longer viewed witchcraft as a hokey mix of superstition and New Age pseudo-paganism. Witchcraft was recognized as a tradition of Power, a power few people doubted that Salem's witches had the ability to wield. Almost overnight, Salem became a magnet for aspiring witches and magicians, and the city's population swelled.

But most of the new arrivals were only interested in learning how to toss fireballs, not in the pagan religion. And so the Salem witch covens turned away the vast majority of wannabes. A select few, however, were sincerely devoted and possessed the necessary natural magical ability to join the ranks of Salem's covens and circles. Additionally, several mundane individuals converted to the neo-pagan religion.

◗ The witches organize themselves into initiatory groups known as covens, traditionally numbering no more than thirteen members at a time. (Some modern covens are more like large "professional associations" for witches.) Many covens turn out to be temporary arrangements for the purpose of teaching, initiation or certain rituals. However, a few powerful and influential covens have existed since before the Awakening.

◗ Starfall

Nowadays Salem is considered one of the most magical cities in North America. About half the population belongs to one neo-pagan sect or another such as the Church of Gaia, the Covenant of the Goddess, the Reformed Druids of North America or the like. More important, the percentage of magically talented individuals in Salem's population is estimated to be six times the national average. Most of the magic-workers in the city are witches or follow one of the nature-magic traditions. However, the magical population also contains a significant minority of hermetics and a handful of Amerind and tribal shamans. At least half the spellworms in the city are adepts of one type or another, usually clairvoyants, aura readers and fortune tellers.

◗ I thought nature magic was a European thing?

◗ Q-bert

◗ Well, most of the people living in Boston *are* Europeans, albeit removed from the "old country" by a few centuries. Compared to places like Seattle, New England contains virtually no Native American inhabitants. So in many of the ways that matter, Boston is more like a European city than an American plex

◗ Talon

Salem is also home to the Crowhaven Circle, a witchcraft school that trains apprentices and initiates in large "classes" rather than the traditional individual training used by most covens. Crowhaven is still tiny compared to the magical studies programs of schools like MIT&T, but its waiting list of applicants is quite long.

In addition to Crowhaven, the large magical community of Salem supports numerous small magic-related businesses in the town.

◗ Salem is *the* best place to buy talismans and magical gear in the Boston area. You'll find most stuff at 60 to 80 percent of what it would cost you in Seattle, and most of it good quality. The loreshops tend to have a Celtic/Wiccan/European slant to them, but it's not too hard to mix-and-match to suit your needs. Keep in mind that almost all of the lorestores make most of their money selling useless crystals and amulets to tourists, so you'll need to ask to see the genuine stuff

◗ Morgana

Periodically, schools such as MIT&T and corporate headhunters try to recruit magically talented individuals or freelance practicing magicians in the area, but most recruiters meet with little success.

◗ That doesn't surprise me. Some witches may be able to stomach corporate work, but most of them would never think of jobbing for one of the corps—remember, neo-paganism is essentially a nature religion, and most corps are not particularly known for their environmental responsibility. A lot of people think that all the recruiters who visit Salem are really just watchers keeping an eye out for trouble. After all, the area does harbor one or more covens that occasionally take action against polluters (which may explain some of the troubles that corps have experienced in the wake of the Toxic Tea Party)

◗ Farrow

WARPATH

When the Indian Wars ended and the nations of North America signed the Treaty of Denver with the newly formed Native American Nations, the native tribes with ancestral lands east of the Mississippi River were a little put out—to say the least—by the fact that the United States and Canada refused to cede those ancestral lands to them. Some individuals called for a continuation of the Ghost Dance to remove all non-natives from the entire North American continent, but Howling Coyote convinced his followers to accept the compromise and offered a plan to incorporate the eastern tribes into the NAN.

◗ The Ghost Dancers couldn't afford to push their luck. The Dance might have cowed the North American governments with the activation of the Cascade volcanoes, but the Ghost Dancers were nearly at the limit of their strength. Their magic relied on the lives of so many dancers to fuel it that they couldn't afford to fight a war of attrition, and neither side wanted control of a destroyed country—so negotiation was the only way to go.

◗ Old Brave

◗ Fragging apologist. The Ghost Dance shouldn't have ended until all of the invaders were driven off our land, along with their cancerous cities and the poisons they brought with them
◗ Red Hand

◗ Listen, boy, I was *there*. I saw a lot of people—good and brave men and women—die on both sides of the war. I danced with my wife until she fell into a medicine man's arms and died, watched her give her very breath and spirit to free our people. What do *you* know about the Dance or what it cost us?
◗ Old Brave

◗ I know that our war isn't over yet, old man. Not until all of our land and our people are free.
◗ Red Hand

Anti-Amerind sentiment was running high in the United States at the end of the Ghost Dance Rebellion (as the UCAS history books still call it). Native reservations on U.S. soil were immediately abolished and their populations "repatriated" to the NAN. In New England, the government seized some fairly prosperous reservations and gave their residents 24 hours to vacate and board a transport to NAN territory or risk arrest. The brutality and abuse of the re-education camps was not repeated because no one wanted to risk the wrath of the Ghost Dancers, but the United States made it clear that they were taking the eastern tribes' land and forcing them to relocate whether they wanted to or not.

Over the years, the eastern tribals in the NAN have continued to call for either war or negotiation with the UCAS and CAS governments to secure some of their sacred tribal sites, many of which were desecrated by the governments that took control of them. The NAN's Sovereign Tribal Council agrees that the desecrations are a continuing insult to the eastern tribals and all of their ancestors, but the serious military, economic and social issues facing the NAN have pushed the issue onto the back burner.

◗ The issue has been pushed aside and forgotten by cowardly old men and women who got *their* sacred lands back and were willing to sacrifice the rest of us to maintain their precious peace with our oppressors.
◗ Red Hand

However, a few impatient members of the eastern tribes have taken matters into their own hands over the years. In 2040, for example, a Connecticut casino on the former site of a tribal reservation was hit with a ritual magic explosion that leveled part of the building and set the rest on fire, killing eighteen people and injuring numerous others. A group calling itself "Warpath" took the credit for the attack, saying that it "struck in the name of those whose lands were first taken from them, whose spirits cry out for justice." The NAN governments immediately denied any association with the terrorists and the Tribal Council promised the UCAS that it would cooperate fully in investigating the attack. Tensions ran high on both sides for a while, but the UCAS has chosen to accept the NAN's explanation.

◗ All patriots are called terrorists at first—just look at the IRA and the Ghost Dance Rebellion. You're only a terrorist until you *win*.
◗ Red Hand

◗ Listen, omae, you Warpath fraggers had better watch your hoops If I ever catch any of you messing with something on American soil, I'll give you an unmarked grave for your "sacred ground."
◗ Dr. Death

BREAK/ Okay, children. That's enough. This is not the place to post your political agenda or your childish threats. Stick to information or you're going to spend a lot of time in the ShadowCell. Thank you for your cooperation.
◗ Captain Chaos
Transmitted: 18 March 2058 at 01:38:02 (EST)

◗ How many members does Warpath have?
◗ Warpie@backbay.ma.ucas

◗ Not many. Probably no more than fifty core members and maybe a couple hundred sympathizers in all of North America. Word has it that the big wheels in the group are a lodge of shamans who get everyone else all whipped up about their "sacred mission."
◗ Spook

SOUTH BOSTON BLUES

by Southie Sam

My friends, not all of Boston is as neat and tidy as the travel brochures and corporate press releases would have you believe. True, most of the metroplex exists under the watchful eyes and control of the megacorporations and their government lapdogs, but some areas of the plex have been written off and left to rot by the rest of the city. Some of those areas, such as the Rox and the Lowell/Lawrence Sprawl, are already festering. Others, like South Boston, are merely starting to. But they do offer one thing that the rest of Boston can't—freedom from megacorporate law and order. That's why so many marginal types—including shadowrunners—live in these neighborhoods. So read on, friends, because if you're going to be running the shadows in Boston you're bound to end up in one of these areas sooner or later.

SOUTH BOSTON

South Boston—"Southie" to the locals—has always had a rep as an ethnic neighborhood. In the past few decades it's grown into a patchwork of small enclaves of black, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Hispanic and Irish humans, orks, trolls and dwarfs, as well as a few upscale townhouse developments.

Southie's most prosperous new residents live in areas toward the coast and downtown Boston. Here, the demand for new housing in the metroplex has created many little new and renovated neighborhoods that provide homes for many of the city's upscale workers, as well as members of the Bohemian club and music scene. Farther south, the area gives way to the ethnic enclaves. These lower-middle class neighborhoods are inhabited by honest,

hard-working folks who crowd the northbound "T" trains every day: the city's blue-collar workers, low-level corporate employees and service workers.

But the true heart of Southie is located in and around the Cathedral of the Holy Cross, the somewhat battered and bruised seat of the Catholic Archdiocese of Boston. This area attracted a large number of Irish immigrants in the 2030s, and soon South Boston became known as the home of city's Irish community—which is largely responsible for the unique flavor of South Boston, as well as the main source of violence that has plagued it in recent years, known as the Troubles.

◗ Southie is not a good place to be an elf, take my word for it. A lot of the Irish folk in the neighborhood distrust us at best and there are some who'll start organizing a lynch mob given the slightest excuse. A few months ago, some mates and I had to set up an operation in Southie for about a week, and I got nothing but drek everywhere I went. It was rarely overt hostility, but pubs and restaurants would always mess up my orders, getting served always took forever, cabs would tend to skip past and drek like that. Most everyone was oh-so polite about it, but you can tell when you're not welcome. Can't say I was sorry when we finished up and got out of there.
◗ Briar

◗ A lot of people in Southie have learned harsh lessons about trusting elves, Briar. I'm not saying that the way they treated you was right, but a lot of them think the Sidhe took their home away from them with pretty words and magical promises
◗ Gillie

◗ 'Tis true. The Fair Folk may be beautiful, but all their glamour and mist conceals a cruel and whimsical nature. Take no gifts from them nor hospitality, or they'll steal your life, your livelihood and even your soul for the mere sport of it.
◗ Padric

◗ Care to back that bit of innuendo up with some actual *facts*, you drek-eating Humanis wannabe?
◗ Remmy

◗ Watch what you say, boyo. I'm no policlubber scum, I'm a dwarf as well as Irish and proud of both. 'Course, that didn't get me and mine very much from the "Land of the Ever Young" now, did it? Before we came to the UCAS, my dad worked for the government in Eire. During Liam O'Connor's "reorganizations," my father—like anyone else who wasn't an elf—received a "generous" pension that was barely enough to live on and offered a chance to do menial work. And our entire family was placed under surveillance as possible "revolutionaries." Tir na nÓg is a dream of peace and plenty only for those that the Sidhe decide are fit, and that's the truth
◗ Padric

◗ Chummers, South Boston and the Rox aren't good places to be *anything* in one place or another. The whole area is split up into ghettos and enclaves separated along racial, cultural or ethnic lines. If you're Japanese, you don't want to wander around in one of the neighborhoods filled with former workers displaced by the Japanacorps. If you're a Native American, you don't want to walk around in one of the neighborhoods filled with people forced off their land by the NAN. It's not that hard to avoid trouble in South Boston—just stick with your own kind and mind your own business.
◗ Facade

◗ South Boston has some gangs, although not nearly as many as the Rox. Most of the gangs tend to be Irish, but other gangs identify themselves with other ethnic groups. Battle lines are also drawn between humans and metahumans.
◗ Smoke-n-Mirrors

The Troubles

Ignorance, prejudice, suspicion and violence have always plagued places like Southie and the Rox, places where different ethnic and racial groups live side-by-side even as the powers-that-be force them to fight for pieces of the same shrinking economic pie. Black versus white, Catholic versus Protestant, Anglo versus Asian, human versus metahuman— for centuries, the residents of these neighborhoods have found all sorts of reasons to fight among themselves. After awhile, the rest of Boston simply stopped trying to remember who was fighting who each year and simply started calling the never-ending violence the Troubles.

The roots of the most serious Troubles now plaguing South Boston can be traced back to 2034, when the elves of Ireland "reclaimed their ancestral homeland" and declared the founding of Tir na nÓg on the Emerald Isle. Though many elves around the world saw the establishment of Tir na nÓg as a promising new beginning, many non-elven Irish emigrants saw it as nothing more than the unlawful occupation of *their* ancestral homeland. Tensions between elves and Irish immigrants in Boston increased immediately, as the immigrants blamed the elves for the loss of their home country.

◗ Of course, the great majority of the people objecting to the formation of Tir na nÓg had left their "homeland" behind years ago or had never even set foot on Irish soil. Some of the most influential "Irish" families in Boston have been here for nearly two hundred years, but they still cling fiercely to their Hibernian heritage and identity. And there are now more Irish people in the world than could ever possibly fit into Tir na nÓg if they all decided to return to their "homeland."
◗ Aqua Velva

◗ Boston's Irish seem to be split into two major camps over the issue of Tir na nÓg. The minority group thinks that the elven-instituted return to a magical Celtic heritage is the most jewel thing since Irish whiskey—most of these folks wish they could be elves, or bards and druids at the very least. But the majority of the Boston Irish think Tir na nÓg is run by a bunch of uppity elves who robbed the Irish of their land and heritage, just like the British did centuries earlier. They hate everything Tir na nÓg stands for and are none too fond of elves in general.
◗ Celtic

● For what it's worth, many of the Irish immigrants in Boston are metahuman. Almost no elves, but plenty of dwarfs, orks and trolls—including the uniquely Celtic breed of Fomorian troll. Plenty of us are none too happy about Tir na nÓg either, because the new government doesn't welcome metahumans other than elves. You'll note that the ruling families of the Dannan Mor don't have anything other than beautiful people among them. Ireland's "destiny" can't include anyone who don't look good on camera.
● Bres

BLOODY THURSDAY

The simmering "Irish problem" reached a head on St. Patrick's Day in 2039, mere weeks after the Night of Rage ripped through Seattle and metahuman violence was exploding all across North America and the world. During the city's annual parade to celebrate the traditional Irish holiday, a terrorist group known as the Knights of the Red Branch "struck a blow for Eire" by detonating a bomb in a popular elven restaurant along the parade route, killing twenty-four people and injuring dozens more.

The parade rapidly degenerated into a general riot that engulfed the metroplex, as residents of various nationalities and classes took the opportunity to settle old scores. By the time the city authorities managed to impose martial law and restore order, hundreds were dead and hundreds more injured. The memories of "Bloody Thursday," as the incident came to be called, still stir deep anger and resentment in many Bostonians.

● It's drekheads like the Knights that give the Irish a bad name. The majority of Irish people in Boston are just normal folks, not fanatical terrorists. I'd like to see our homeland reclaimed, but not through this sort of senseless violence.
● Celtic

● You're a dreamer, Celtic. The Sidhe will never willingly give up their control of our homeland. The only way things can be changed is by people willing to fight for what they believe in. Our human ancestors drove the Sidhe under the hill before, and we can do it again. Overthrow the elven fascists! Free Eire!
● Red Knight

● Oh yeah, you're real brave, firebombing dangerous restaurants that cater to an elven clientele and bashing the occasional pointy-ear. That's sure the path to political change, all right.
● Kurtz

● In a war for freedom there are no innocent bystanders.
● Red Knight

THE ROX

Located southwest of Boston's downtown, "the Rox" is a modern urban jungle of Boston outcasts and pariahs. Over the years, the Rox's inhabitants have benefited little from the city's economic recovery. In fact, Boston's boom seems to have worsened life in the Rox, as the corps continue to use the area as a dumping ground for their dirty business.

The Rox was already known as a breeding ground for gangs, racial unrest, shadow activity, crime and vice when corporate development in Boston's downtown forced the dirty bookstores, prostitutes, strip joints and porno palaces out of the so-called Combat Zone and into the poorer neighborhood. In time, the Zone expanded and now makes up a considerable strip where illegal and semi-legal businesses can operate openly. The Zone also contains a few bars and nightclubs that cater to Boston's "rough crowd"— shadow-types and well-to-do sprawlers out for a night of fun on the edge.

Local Gangs

But the Rox is best known for its large gang population. The gangs here generally organize themselves along racial and ethnic lines. Each claims an area as its turf and defends that turf against all comers. Most of the gangs also extort money from small businesses located within their turf, offering "protection" against the incursions of other gangs as well as against "accidents." Some of the larger Rox gangs include the Ancients, the Cutters, the Bane-Sidhe, the Roxx and Mama's Boys.

The Boston chapter of the Ancients is small in comparison to the gang's chapters in plexes like Seattle and New York, mostly because rival gangs like the Bane-Sidhe make a point of taking elf gangers down when they can. The Boston Ancients probably have about fifty or so members who control territory on the western side of the Rox, near the major highways and sometimes out as far as Route 95.

The Bane-Sidhe are a predominantly Irish gang, and as you might guess from the name, they're none too fond of elves. The gang controls turf along the southernmost area of South Boston, and members have been known to make "examples" of any elf who strays too near their territory. Rumor has it the Bane-Sidhe also work as "errand boys" for the Knights of the Red Branch. The Red Branch may even be recruiting from the ranks of the gang, according to some buzz on the streets. Naturally, the Bane-Sidhe and the Ancients are mortal enemies and rumbles between the two gangs are vicious and bloody.

The Boston chapter of the Cutters contains no more than a dozen or so members and operates like a small Seoulpa Ring: members focus on "high class" action like fixing, fencing, computer crime and such, rather than "slimy" rackets like prostitution and chip-peddling. They're strictly small-time, so the Mafia leaves them alone and lets them grab the crumbs that the Mob can't be bothered with. If you need some discreet assistance in the Rox and don't want to deal with the Mob, the Cutters are a good bet.

The Roxx are currently the major gang in the Combat Zone and the central part of the Rox. The gang members are a mixed bag of humans and metahumans of different ethnic backgrounds. The Roxx functions like a "farm team" for the Boston Mafia, handling the operations in the area that the Mafia can't be bothered with on a daily basis—primarily the local sleaze parlors and prostitution. Jamal "Two Time" Dred, the gang's leader, fancies himself a "made man" in the Mob, but Don O'Rilley views the entire gang as errand boys and cannon fodder.

◆ "Two-Time?"
◆ Farrell

◆ During Dred's early career as a snot-nosed ganger, he served two sentences in the juvie hall. After his second stay, he swore he'd never see the inside of a prison again. I figure Two-Time will see the bottom of the Harbor or the inside of a pine box long before he gets put away a third time.
◆ Riley

The gang known as Mama's Boys work for a mysterious fixer called Mama who's something of an urban legend in the Rox. Most of the gang members are orks and trolls, but a few hobgoblins, ogres, at least one cyclops and even a satyr or two run with the group, too. Rumor has it some of Mama's Boys are ghouls, but I don't know anyone who has ever seen them.

◆ I have, Sammy. They're not really regular members of the gang, though—they're more like Mama's personal lieutenants. The regular members seem to defer to them when they're around. I've encountered at least four other ghouls down in the Catacombs under the Rox, and I suspect there are plenty more where they came from. The ghouls seem to have hooked up with Mama through the plex's Tamanous organleggers
◆ Downside

Urban Tribes

The Rox also harbors several urban tribes. Most people see little difference between these tribes and the local gangs, but the tribes consider themselves very different. They have chosen to live in the urban jungle of the Rox, and they claim to commune with the spirits of the city in much the same way as the ancient peoples spoke with the spirits of the land. They engage in criminal activity only to survive and don't get tied up in the gangs' different turf wars unless they can't avoid it.

The tribes are masterful scavengers and pack rats, managing to live on the garbage that the rest of the metroplex dumps into the Rox. They live in abandoned buildings, which they transform into maze-like habitats, and they defend their territories fiercely against intruders. Generally, the tribes manage to live in relative harmony with each other, but they sometimes skirmish with the gangs and other groups in the Rox.

◆ These tribes dig up some truly amazing drek: tech gear, weapons, chemicals, spare parts, stripped-down vehicles and all kinds of other stuff. Some say the city spirits guide them to it; others say they just know parts of the plex that no one ever goes to. They probably steal a good chunk of the stuff from different places, too. Still, they make great contacts to have if you're looking to get that certain something.
◆ Picken N. Grinnin

◆ Most folks don't realize that the tribes have found accessways to the Catacombs through the old sealed-off Roxbury "T" station. The underground tunnels of the Catacombs are a great way to get around without attracting attention, and the black-market bazaars down there can supply just about anything for the right price. Some of the gangs in the area work the Catacombs, too.
◆ Tunnel-Rat

◆ The tribes of the Rox are an interesting group. Probably a half-dozen or so significant tribes live in the area, along with about a dozen smaller, extended-family "clans." They go by names such as the Firbolg, Netwalkers, Graystones, Rust Dancers and others. They reject the trappings of twenty-first-century civilization and almost all are SINless, complete ciphers and unknowns on the corporate and government record books. Typically, the tribes adopt different "pre-technological" cultural traditions and symbols—predominantly mixtures of Celtic and American Indian traditions. However, nearly all the tribes also display influences from religious traditions such as Catholicism, various shamanistic systems, witchcraft and even voudoun. The tribes would make a fascinating subject for anthropological study if someone could earn their trust.
◆ Holly

◆ The tribes really are in touch with the spirits of the city, too. Most of them, anyway. All of the tribes I've dealt with in the Rox have shamans—Rat, Dog, Gargoyle, they follow all the urban totems—who really know how to whistle up the spirits when they need to. I've heard that some tribal shamans follow the Celtic and witch totems, too, but I've never met any.
◆ Bodie

◆ Don't assume that all of the Rox's tribes are "primitives." The Netwalkers include some accomplished techies who are amazingly adept at locating difficult-to-find data and stripping old computer tech out of the Catacomb tunnels, abandoned buildings in the Rox and other sources. I've heard the Netwalkers have banks of optical processors, fiber cable and computer hardware, so it's a safe bet they're doing some pretty involved Matrix work. Drek, could be that the Netwalkers are one of the tribes who've allegedly made contact with the "spirits of the Matrix" and are learning how to skate the 'Trix without decks. That's right, the otaku again!
◆ Crash'n'Burn

THE BOSTON UNDERWORLD

by Digger

Just because Boston has a reputation as a law-and-order city, most people think that the criminals and shadow-types operating here are small-time independents. Not so, chummers. Boston's underworld is deeper and darker—both figuratively and literally—than most people imagine. After all, the syndicates are active anywhere opportunity exists, and that definitely includes the Hub. I've done some digging (it's what I do, after all) at Shadowland's request to provide you with the following profiles of the kinds of people you're likely to encounter in the Boston underworld.

THE MAFIA

The northeastern UCAS region has been a Mafia stronghold for a long time. The Mob is the top dog of the Boston crime scene,

controlling all of the major criminal enterprises and markets of any worth in the metroplex.

Mob influence is most visible in the Rox's Combat Zone, where it directly or indirectly controls nearly every sleaze shop, bar and other business. These operations generate considerable nuyen for the Mob and also provide a convenient way to launder other illegal profits. Nearly all of the major Rox gangs have Mafia ties, and the Family uses them as couriers and "front men" for things like BTL sales in the neighborhood.

Though the Mob dominates the plex's rackets, a few other syndicates operate in Boston and would undoubtedly like to claim a bigger piece of the Boston pie. The Triads, for example, are strong in the city's Chinatown, and recently they've been trying to muscle in on Mob rackets along the edges of the Rox. So far, the Triads have been moving very cautiously, but with some of the strange magic and other drek they have at their command, who knows what they'll try next?

Yakuza also operate in Boston, but they pretty much limit their operations to the corporate sphere. But the Japanacorps are quite interested in Boston and the ECSE, and when they come you can bet the yaks won't be far behind.

But the most dangerous threat to Boston's Mafia by far is the dissension within its own ranks. Trouble's been brewing between Boston's Irish and Sicilian Mob families for some time now, and under the right circumstances that trouble could spark a full-fledged Mob war like the one now raging in Seattle. In particular, Don Anthony "Fat Tony" Morelli is always looking for ways to make capo Don Conor "The Mick" O'Rilley's life more difficult and weaken his control of the city (and I don't think he's above hiring shadowrunners to do some of his dirty work). O'Rilley knows about Morelli's campaign, and he's taking measures to secure his position against any trouble.

The O'Rilley Family

Conor O'Rilley, the boss of the Boston Mafia, is an unusual man (actually, an unusual elf—O'Rilley's the only metahuman don of a major North American city and the only meta on the Mafia's ruling Commissione).

O'Rilley's family emigrated to the United States from Ireland back in the early twentieth century. His great-grandfather, Thomas O'Rilley, started the O'Rilleys off on their underworld career by amassing a fortune running illegal booze during Prohibition. And O'Rilley's grandfather and father were well-known and prominent "businessmen" in Boston, despite the fact that most of their money came from illegal sources. O'Rilley's father, Jack, was a big noise in the Irish Mob in the metroplex. He is best known for allying the O'Rilleys with the Italian Mafia during the Mob's North American reorganization.

Conor O'Rilley was born in 2014, during the first wave of UGE to hit the world. Back in those days, elf and dwarf babies were labeled "mutants," whose "deformities" were believed to result from background radiation, chemical contamination and other such causes. O'Rilley had the luck to be born into a powerful and influential family, which undoubtedly eased his early life, and his father did not let Conor's race interfere with his plans to groom his only son as his successor.

O'Rilley steadily worked his way up in his father's operation, and by the mid 2040s he had taken the reins of the family business and was running things more smoothly than ever. His aggressive operations in the Rox and along the strip, as well as his campaign to court the Irish immigrants of the metroplex, helped put the O'Rilleys on top of the Boston Mafia and earned him a seat on the Commissione.

O'Rilley's reign over the Boston Mob has been characterized by many "progressive" ideas and policies, including the increased recruitment of metahumans and use of magic. O'Rilley seems to consider himself a child of the Sixth World, part of a "new generation" of mafiosi who use all the tools available, without regard for the superstitions of the past. The strategy has worked for him so far, but it may end up backfiring if O'Rilley can't keep the more conservative local mafiosi in line.

● O'Rilley has very strong ties with the Muldoon family, not the least being his marriage to Don Muldoon's darling daughter, Patricia. Lady Pat is said to be a good, unassuming Mafia wife in public, but I've heard rumors that she may have ambitions beyond being another Mafia princess and mother to O'Rilley's heirs
● Republika

● Despite his interest in magic, Don O'Rilley is mundane. He's not as frightened by magic as are a lot of mafioso, and he knows how to use it to his advantage.
● Sigil

● Don O'Rilley's use of magic has earned him the nickname of "the Fairy Godfather" but no one uses that name within earshot of him or his men
● Eraserhead

The Morelli Family

Though Boston's North End is slowly shrinking under the encroachment of the city's expanding corporate sector, much of the historical area's narrow streets and two-hundred year-old buildings remain intact. The area's waterfront features attractions such as the U.S.S. *Constitution*, the oldest United States ship still in existence, but the North End is best known for its shops and restaurants, which offer some of the finest pizza and pasta in New England.

The North End is also the stronghold of the Morellis, a Sicilian Mob family run by old Don "Fat Tony" Morelli, an old-guard mafioso who likes to handle business the old-fashioned way. Morelli is known to everyone in the neighborhood and looks like someone's kindly old uncle—but he has a mean streak a mile wide and deals harshly with anyone who fails to show him the proper respect.

● It's no secret that Morelli doesn't like O'Rilley and would like to see him suffer an unfortunate accident. O'Rilley's liberal policies regarding magic and metahumans have never met with Morelli's approval. Fortunately for O'Rilley, he has the support of the Muldoons and the Commissione at the moment, so Morelli can't do too much about it. But that doesn't mean he's not looking for ways to make O'Rilley look bad
● Warpie@backbay.ma.ucas

THE YAKUZA

If you ask me (and Cap did) the most likely challenge to the Boston Mafia's supremacy is going to come from the Yakuza allied with Mitsuhama Computer Technologies. MCT is one of the big corps in the Hub, and along with Renraku and Fuchi it has been exerting a certain "Japanizing" influence in the area for a while now. And any importation of Japanese workers, Japanese values and "corporate culture" inevitably brings some Yakuza as well.

Right now, the yaks play only in their own backyards. They run some black-market and vice-market action within the Big Three corps and their company neighborhoods (with the approval of executives and middle managers, of course), but they haven't touched anything else in the metroplex—yet. Still, the yak-boys undoubtedly are searching for the right lever to use against the Mafia. So if trouble erupts between the city's Mafia families, watch for Boston's yaks to fan the flames and fight over the pieces when the smoke clears.

That's going to be the trick. A lot of cities are wary of becoming the next San Francisco, so the Yakuza have been very careful to maintain a low profile by limiting their operations to the Japanacorp enclaves and areas untouched by the Mafia. They also lack the manpower to successfully wage an all-out war against the local mobsters, so they won't be muscling their way into any Mafia rackets. No, the only realistic way they'll increase their influence is by exploiting conflict between the Mafia families
Yokoshi

THE TRIADS

Located between the downtown area and South Boston, Chinatown is packed with restaurants, nightclubs and shops. Chinatown is also home to the Triads, which are fighting like cornered wolverines to hold on to their small beachhead in the metroplex. The Triads promote themselves as "defenders of traditional Chinese values," protecting Chinatown against "the corporate and government enemies of the Chinese people." This tactic works like a charm—every Chinatown resident knows that the Triads are involved in the neighborhood rackets, but they view the police and city authorities as their true enemies and so they never cooperate with law-enforcement efforts directed at the Triads. Consequently, authorities have never been able to cultivate any solid leads on the organizations.

Actually, only one Triad operates in Boston, a group called the Mutual Prosperity League. The League has ties to Hong Kong's Red Dragon Triad, which is allegedly led by the great dragon Lung. So the Mutual Prosperity League may well have resources far out of proportion to its numbers and influence in the metroplex.
China Syndrome

Chinatown's all-night restaurants make the area popular with nightclubbers and other insomniacs. But be careful if you plan to talk biz in one of these places—the Triads keep a close eye on all the nightspots, and they make it a point to know just about everything that goes on in and around Chinatown.
Neon Dragon

UNIQUE ATTRACTIONS

There really are no other places in Boston—or the world, for that matter—quite like Boston Harbor and the old city subway system (now known as the Catacombs). Both are singular phenomena unique to Boston.
Yaz

BOSTON HARBOR AND THE TOXIC TEA PARTY

Boston Harbor has been an environmental disaster for as long as anyone in the area can remember. Apart from some feeble efforts to clean up the harbor in the late twentieth century, no one's ever bothered to even try dealing with it. Consequently, the coastline around Boston has become a toxic nightmare of drek that's probably damaged the local ecology beyond repair.

The worst ecological disaster to hit the harbor—the "Tea Party" of 2053—occurred when a United Oil tanker with damaged onboard guidance systems ruptured its hull and dumped millions of gallons of petrochemicals into the harbor. The spill killed off a lot of the marine life and caused the surviving plants and animals to mutate almost beyond recognition. (Folks in coastal areas regularly report the carcasses of some very strange sea critters washing up on the shore.)

A lot of people have speculated that the UniOil accident was the work of a techno-savvy toxic shaman. The number of toxics in the harbor area certainly tends to support that idea.
Eastman

Several biotech companies are engineering new strains of toxin-resistant plant and animal species for "restocking" the harbor and the surrounding shoreline, but some marine biologists are concerned that the engineered strains of algae and other marine creatures may further upset the already shaky ecological balance of the Massachusetts Bay.

Those same biotech companies regularly hire crews to go out and catch specimens of mutated sea life from the harbor for study. The pay's good, but think long and hard if you're contemplating signing on. These locate-and-capture expeditions frequently result in nothing more than a couple more dead bodies fouling the water.
Sinbad

Competition between the bio-corps for the latest "designs" of genengineered marine life is becoming fierce, and it's drawing in some other companies like Manadyne and CrossCorp, which belong to research cooperatives with some of the biotech firms. Some bio-corps are even calling in consultants from firms like Aqua Arcana out in CalFree for advice. So plan on seeing more runs involving snatching genetic data and prototype organisms.
See-Bee

◗ The biotech corps are also working on microorganisms and algae designed to feed on contaminants and then die off when the water has been cleaned of them.
◗ Webster

◗ The harbor is in need of more than mere science can offer. The Spirit of the Sea cries out in pain from the poisons that float in her and the sea spirits have become twisted and toxic. The city must remove the blight from the Sea or risk becoming the target of the ocean's mighty wrath.
◗ Morgana

The poisoning of the harbor and the coastline has brought toxic shamans out of the woodwork. Some have devoted themselves to expanding the taint of the harbor farther along the coast and onto the land. Others use their magic to avenge the poisoning of the sea. Though I don't personally support such behavior, I can understand it. Any witch or nature magician will tell you that living near the poisoned shore for any length of time becomes quite painful for a magically active individual—my own experience confirms this—and such pain can easily drive magic-workers nearly mad.

◗ What do you mean "nearly"? Those toxic fraggers are totally barking mad, lady
◗ Aqua Regia

Despite the toxicity of the water, Boston's waterfront contains a lot of shops and tourist attractions, such as the New England Aquarium. The aquarium is one of the most famous of its kind in North America. Its huge display tanks contain a wide variety of marine-life specimens, including devilfish, mermaids, leatherbacks, torpedo sharks, unicorn fish and other new metaspecies from all around the world. The aquarium is also a center for biological and oceanographic research and is used by marine biologists, oceanographers and researchers from numerous universities and corporations. The aquarium is also one of the driving forces in investigating new ways to clean up the harbor and re-introduce marine life to it.

◗ For months the aquarium has been working with some biotechnology corporations to develop new breeds of marine life to replenish the Massachusetts Bay. Security around the aquarium's marine biology labs and research areas has been increased in recent weeks—a good indication that the program may be onto something valuable.
◗ See-Bee

◗ Some of that security is for the two dozen merrows the aquarium pulled out of the harbor during rescue operations it conducted following the Toxic Tea Party. Of course, now all the sentient-rights activists are up in arms about the merrows being "held captive" by the aquarium and turned into a tourist attraction. What do people want the aquarium to do? It's helping cleaning up the merrows' home territory. Should it put the merrows back into the toxic mess and let them fend for themselves?
◗ Aqua-Regia

◗ Moving the merrows to a new home away from the toxic harbor would be more humane than keeping them caged for nearly five years, Aqua.
◗ Washburn

◗ Maybe somebody should ask the merrows what *they* want instead of arguing over them like pets, neh?
◗ Deep-6

THE CATACOMBS

Boston's subway system—the oldest in North America—is run and maintained by the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA). The "T" system, as it's called, includes above- and underground trains that run throughout the entire metroplex and connect to many surrounding cities as well. In fact, a rider can travel to many parts of New England without ever leaving the confines of the "T."

The last major work on the "T" system was performed between 2005 and 2013 (after the Manhattan Quake did some damage) and between 2030 and 2035. During those projects, new tunnels were bored, old ones refurbished, newer and better track and trains installed, and overland rails added to extend the "T" network into New Hampshire and Rhode Island.

But the most interesting feature of the subway system is the Catacombs. The Catacombs are miles of old tunnels, maintenance shafts and stations that were sealed off during the last two periods of work on the underground subway network, or simply abandoned and then forgotten during decades of bureaucratic shuffling. No one really knows the true extent of the Catacombs, because people have been tunneling under the streets and buildings of the city for at least 150 years—building basements, sewer tunnels and storm drains, air shafts, access tunnels and other now-forgotten passageways. Some of this subterranean maze was surveyed during the initial construction of the city's subway system, but nearly all the records and maps of the early subway were lost during a fire in the Hall of Records in June of '29 (not to mention the computer records lost during the Crash that same year).

The Catacombs are home to devil rats and cockroaches, black marketeers, fences and some of the nastiest criminal scum of the city. City authorities deny the existence of the Catacombs and law-enforcement personnel never venture into their depths, which allows numerous individuals to operate black-market "bazaars" in various stations and tunnels throughout the underground maze.

◗ It's not entirely true to say the cops don't go down into the Catacombs. Knight Errant and many corporate watchers have undercover agents and paid informants operating in the tunnels and old stations. Keep that in mind if you do any shopping down there, or you may discover that your target has somehow caught wind of your operation before you've even begun
◗ Day-Tripper

◗ The permanent residents of the Catacombs—not counting the devil rats and cockroaches, that is—are even sorrier than the castoffs you'll find in the Rox. Anyone who actually chooses to live down in the tunnels is usually hiding from some serious heat or preju-

dice on the surface, so the Catacombs attract some of the nastiest goblinizations and the worst criminal scum you can imagine. According to rumors, even worse things live in the old tunnels as well—ghosts, ghouls, vampires, cockroach spirits and more

● Dark Walker

But more important for shadowrunners, the Catacombs provide a convenient underground network that runs under the entire metroplex. Using the tunnels, a team can travel almost anywhere in Boston or its outskirts without exposing itself to the dangers in the city above.

● This is true, but keep in mind that entrances and exits into the Catacombs aren't on every street corner. They're fairly easy to find in rundown areas like Southie and the Rox, or in parts o Cambridge that contain lots of older buildings that haven't under gone too much renovation. But finding access in other areas can be a bit tricky.

● Emerson

● If you're going to use the Catacombs, do yourself a favor and hire a guide. Knowledge of the secret entrances, tunnels and chambers—not to mention the layout of the entire thing—is jeal ously guarded information. But a good guide will take you through most of the hidden parts of the Catacombs if you're willing to be blindfolded and led for part of the way so you don't learn his secret routes and passages.

● Donner

● Many of the Rox tribes trade with the black marketeers of the Catacombs, and sometimes tribe members hire themselves out as guides. Some tribes also scavenge down in the Catacombs—which is probably where they stumble over some of their more exotic finds
● Numbers

● I agree that guides are indispensable, but be prepared to pay some high fees. Under an informal agreement, the folks who regularly use or live in the Catacombs limit "traffic" through the underground. This arrangement helps ensure that the cost of clearing out the Catacombs remains higher than the benefits—which is the sole reason that Boston's megacorps and the city government tolerate the place's existence
● King Felonious

Mama

The mysterious fixer-cum-legend called "Mama" is the stuff of urban folklore in the Hub. I can't say for sure if most of the stories about the old crone are true, but I've heard enough from people I trust to believe that she does exist and may be nearly as powerful and influential as the stories claim.

According to the scuttlebutt, Mama is a withered old crone, all skin and bones, with a taste for long, dark robes and cloaks with hoods. Despite her advanced age, Mama commands great respect and obedience—mainly because she reputedly possesses incredible magical power. Though she is not given to showy displays, stories abound of her enemies simply vanishing or turning up dead without a mark on them. And her powers reputedly enable her to know things that no one could possibly know and turn a profit from any situation.

Mama lives somewhere down in the Catacombs, in an elaborate place constructed from the ruins of an abandoned "T" station that dates back to the beginning of the subway system. There, Mama handles all the mundane business of running a shadow-empire—allegedly, Mama has her bony claws in a number of pies and nothing that happens in the Boston underworld escapes her notice. Besides business, Mama holds court and hears the petitions of the underworld dwellers who need her help and wisdom.

Though the truth of these stories may be questionable, there's no doubt that Mama is a powerful presence in the Boston shadows. But take care if you deal with her—Mama drives hard bargains, and she seems to make a practice of extracting future favors from runners.

● Digger left out some of the more lurid rumors about Mama. Some folks claim—with a straight face, mind you—that she's a powerful witch, a free spirit, an ancient vampire or ghoul, a demon or even something worse. I've also heard people swear that she kidnaps victims and devours their flesh, blood and souls. The lady clearly has a fair amount of magic at her beck and call, but the source of that magic isn't really clear. Nobody knows what tradition she follows, and I've never met anyone who has seen her cast spells.
● Reverb

● I have met this "Mama," and I can tell you that I have never encountered a more frightening creature. She is an ancient looking hag, with skin like cracked leather and gray, brittle hair. She speaks in a crooning voice marked by a strange accent that I could not place, and she has a disconcerting tendency to chuckle to herself at times. I did not see her perform any magic, but I did have an opportunity to assense her. Her aura was like nothing I have ever seen. Either she had managed to mask it in a way I have never encountered, or she is some kind of metahuman or goblinization unknown to me. I detected no signs of Power—but I know that her dark eyes seemed to bore into my very soul. Whatever she may be, Mama does command the Art.
● Erasmus

● The "wicked witch" routine sounds a little to pat to me. I'd guess the old slitch—or old whatever—is simply using some very effective illusions (or even old-fashioned makeup) to enhance a fearsome reputation
● Hansen

Working Underground

The fixers and brokers of the Catacomb's shadow economy rely heavily on shadowrunners and others to provide the goods and services that they need to stay in business. So if you're really in need of work—and you're not afraid of the dark—you can always find something in the Catacombs.

Of course, most of the drek going on in the Catacombs is small-time, so it probably won't be anywhere near the big score you're looking for, but there's usually a lot of work to be had and cred is cred, right? And sometimes, a shadowrun for one of the Catacombs fixers or shadow-merchants can turn into a big score. It doesn't happen very often, but it does happen.

If you feel like taking a little bigger risk, you might try running for one of the handful of real powerbrokers down in the Catacombs, like the mysterious Mama or some other big-time fixer. All of these Johnsons want to expand their influence and power in the Catacombs and the metroplex above, but beyond that they all have unique agendas and motives—which may seem quite obscure. But one thing's for certain—none of them likes to hear that a shadowrunning team failed a mission. Keep that in mind before you jump at what might look like a good job offer.

● There's always some freelance salvage work in the Rox and the Catacombs, too. The abandoned buildings in those places sometimes contain some very valuable old technology or other drek left lying around for the taking. If you know what to look for and can deal with rival gangs, tribes and packs of critters, you can turn yourself a tidy little profit selling salvage to the Rox's underground merchants and brokers
● Finder-Keeper

DETROIT • MOTOR CITY

Lately, there's been a whole lotta shakin' goin' on in some important megacorps—including Ares Macrotechnology. That's right, good old Ares, generous supporter of President Haeffner (an old friend of Ares CEO Damien Knight, doncha know) and all-around friend of the UCAS citizenry. Lately, it seems Ares can do no wrong. First the corp so courageously stepped in to contain the "senseless violence" that followed Dunkelzahn's assassination. Then it sent its own personnel into the Chicago Containment Zone to clean up that nasty bug problem. Real stand-up buncha guys, those folks at Ares, ain't they?

Course, Ares ain't fooling those of us who work the shadows. We know that Ares is a corporation's corporation, one of the most powerful of the Big Eight—and neither Ares nor Damien Knight got to where they are now by performing good deeds.

But love it or hate it, Ares is big news in the UCAS and elsewhere, a corp on the move. And that means action in the shadows. And that brings us to the Motor City, because anyone who wants to know what's really going on with Ares and Damien Knight has to start by looking at Detroit. (As my chummer Squire will tell you, Ares *is* Detroit in most of the ways that matter.) So if you're looking to grab a piece of the Ares action (or maybe just looking to get a piece of Damien Knight), check out this file. As always, if you've got better data than what you see here, post it. We'll make it worth your while.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 20 March 2058 at 19:00:04 (EST)

WELCOME TO MOTOR CITY

by Squire

"I *own* this city. My technology built it, my will keeps it going, and two-thirds of its citizens work for me, whether they know it or not."

Lex Luthor talking about Metropolis? Damien Knight talking about Detroit? Actually, it could be either. Ares is the top dog in Motor City, bar none. And with the corp's world headquarters in Detroit, Ares head Damien Knight has turned the city into a personal fiefdom. He doesn't own the city outright—a master manipulator like Knight would never stoop to such crude methods. But through a complex chain of command built on neo-feudal loyalties and obligations, Knight can make just about anyone in the metroplex dance to his tune. Keep that one fact in mind and you might just survive in the shadows of Detroit.

HISTORY

More than three hundred years ago, a French explorer by the name of Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac established a trading post at a *d'etroit* (that means the narrow strait of a river, for those of you who don't parlez vous) at the site of the present-day Civic Center. From that post grew the city of Detroit, which eventually ended up in the hands of the British, then passed to American control until the formation of the UCAS. There's still some traces of French culture in the city, but most of them are pretty faint.

The most important development in Detroit's history happened 162 years ago, when city resident Henry Ford invented the automobile. (As a matter of fact, back in '46 Ares Macrotech sponsored a big city-wide shindig to celebrate the one hundred fiftieth anniversary of Ford's world-altering invention.)

Within a few decades, Americans began to fall in love with the automobile, which spawned a booming automobile industry that employed the vast bulk of Detroit's residents. (Today, certain riggers attach mystical significance to Detroit—also known as "Motor City" and "Motown"—as the birthplace of the automobile.)

Unfortunately, Detroit's prosperity didn't last. When Japanese manufacturers started gearing up and producing their own cars in the second half of the century, the bottom fell out of Detroit's auto industry and the city's car manufacturers took a serious beating from which they never really recovered. They tried cutbacks, layoffs and all sorts of things to regain the ground they'd lost to the Japanese auto manufacturers, and eventually they got up enough steam to start catching up. But they never did regain the kind of monopoly they once enjoyed.

❶ To this day, lotsa people in Detroit blame the Japanese for the collapse of the Detroit auto industry and the dark times that followed. The Japanacorps (and their employees) aren't always real popular hereabouts.
❶ NeonSteel

❶ That's ridiculous. Detroit's problems in the beginning of this century had as much to do with the Japanese as with the weather or the Awakening. It makes no sense
❶ Black-Eyed Susan

❶ Try telling that to someone from the West Side, Suzie. Makes perfect sense to them.
❶ NeonSteel

The fall of the auto-industry giants was the beginning of a long dark time that Detroit's residents haven't forgotten. The decline of the automotive industry was followed by corporate restructuring and downsizing, then the Ghost Dance Rebellion, the Awakening and the Treaty of Denver. Each and every event hit Detroit like a savage gut punch to an old prize fighter until the city finally went down.

When Nissan bought Chrysler Corporation in the early part of the twenty-first century and proceeded to transfer most of the company's manufacturing facilities to other areas where labor was cheaper, the end seemed at hand. Ford and General Motors Corporation retained their offices in downtown Detroit, but moved many of their manufacturing facilities as well. Overcrowded with refugees expelled from territories ceded to the Native American Nations, Detroit's unemployment figures soared and violence became an increasing problem for the city's overworked police and government.

Motor City was experiencing some of the worst economic and political times to hit the old United States since the Great Depression a century earlier, and it needed something to boost its economy and restore hope to its beaten-down people. And just at that time, a man named Nicholas Aurelius entered the scene.

KING ARES

Nicholas Aurelius isn't as well known to history as he should be, but some of the people in Detroit remember him. Old Nick originally worked for GM Corporation, and he bought and sold his way onto the board of that corp and many others in his time. Eventually, he cobbled together some of the smaller businesses he controlled and founded his own company in the early years of the twenty-first century. That company was Ares Industries.

Even though times were tough for Detroit businesses, Aurelius had a reputation for being a fierce trader and businessman with a knack for knowing which way the wind was going to blow. Under Aurelius, Ares Industries developed a reputation for taking tremendous risks that more conservative corporations never would—and winning big every time. Within a few short years, Ares had broken into the Fortune 50.

❶ Of course, Aurelius's acumen wasn't the sole reason for his company's remarkable growth. Most of the little corporations that made up the big new corp were already pretty hot—Aurelius just cobbled them together and slapped a new name on the collection
❶ Bitter Lemon

❶ Aurelius's "uncanny insight" was based primarily on inside information and industrial espionage—two resources that Ares and Old Nick's son, Leonard, rely on to this day.
❶ Pendaflex

Aurelius understood the political and economic currents that had been stirred up by events such as the Supreme Court decisions of 1999 and 2001 and the Ghost Dance Rebellion. Those developments had staggered the United States government. Suddenly, it found itself nearly bankrupt and unable to maintain such basics as adequate programs for social welfare, national defense and scientific research. Aurelius realized that many industries depended on such government programs, and he recognized that a corporation could generate considerable profits by running those programs.

Based on this analysis, Aurelius masterminded Ares's purchase of NASA in 2016, the first of the great wave of privatization deals that swept through the American government. In that deal, Aurelius obtained the entire United States space program, including launch facilities, the entire existing shuttle fleet, the Hubble space telescope and even the tottering space station *Freedom*.

Nobody knows exactly how much Aurelius and Ares Industries paid in the multi-billion-dollar deal, but Aurelius leveraged Ares so deeply that corporate insiders began to predict that Ares would fold within twenty to thirty months. But they didn't know Nicholas Aurelius very well.

Using its newly acquired aerospace capabilities, Ares Industries—with backing from Lloyds of London—initiated an aggressive space-salvage operation. First, Ares stabilized the *Freedom's* faltering orbit. Then, Ares-owned shuttles and crews set about recovering billions of dollars worth of sophisticated hardware and satellites from orbit and returning them to their proper owners—for considerable fees, of course. The corporation also started a regular shuttle service for boosting hardware into orbit. Within months, Ares had claimed the lion's share of this lucrative market, and even the United States—and later, the UCAS—began to use this service. Within an amazingly short period, Ares Industries became the leader of the aerospace industry.

● Ares's recovery operations netted the corp more than simple nuyen. Ares salvage crews regularly handled some of the finest tech, and you can bet that the boys and girls in Ares R&D got a look at it all those goodies before the corp shipped them back to their original owners. And I'm sure those same R&D folks got to play with most of the payloads Ares was boosting into orbit, too. Ares delivered some top-secret military hardware upstairs—hardware that many governments had previously entrusted to their own space programs. Drek, the U.S. satellite command couldn't sneeze without Ares knowing all about it.
● Westlake

Ares's booming growth in those early years brought hundreds of thousands of new jobs to Detroit. As Ares grew, the corporation brought other companies under its corporate "umbrella," either through willing buyouts or Aurelius's shrewd business dealings. Two years after the NASA purchase—by the time most of the "experts" had predicted that Ares would have folded—Ares Industries was one of the ten largest corporations in the entire world.

During the next fifteen years, Aurelius maintained a steady hand on the helm. Ares experienced some minor setbacks, but nothing stopped the company's steady rise to the top. Ares's status as one of the "big boys on the block" was cemented when it joined the select group of corps that established the International Corporate Court and helped lay the foundations of the megacorporate structures that we know and so carefully avoid today. Eventually, Ares sold the refurbished space station *Freedom* to the Zurich-Gemeinschaft Bank—at a considerable profit—and the station became the permanent home of the Zurich-Orbital Bank and the Corporate Court.

In 2030, Old Nicholas retired as CEO and chairman of Ares Macrotechnology. At 64, Aurelius was feeling the toll exacted by a lifetime of working and playing hard. He turned the reins over to his son and heir, Leonard, and made plans to retire to the zero-gravity comfort of Ares's recently completed *Daedalus* space platform, where he intended to undergo rejuvenation therapy. Aurelius never reached the station, however. About eight months later, he suffered a fatal heart attack. He left Leonard his shares in Ares, making his son the CEO and chairman of the board.

And so in 2033, Leonard Aurelius found himself in control of one of the five most powerful companies on Earth—on top of the world, so to speak. Naturally, that's when something happened—something that even wily old Nicholas never would've expected. That something was named Damien Knight.

● I always thought Nicholas Aurelius's death was a little too convenient, kicking off right after his retirement and just before he was supposed to go to *Daedalus* for his rejuve therapy. Almost seems like somebody didn't want the old man to have a chance to repair his worn-out bod and bounce back into the game. Plenty of suits have done it, like Daniel Truman or Leonard Aurelius, and it keeps them going long after they'd normally be expected to retire. The question is, *who* had the most to gain from keeping Nicholas down for the count? Damien Knight, who wanted to snatch the old man's company—or Leonard Aurelius, who undoubtedly wanted daddy out of the family business after all those years of toiling in the great man's shadow? Interesting question, neh?
● Bitter Lemon

● How about some interesting answers to go with it, Lemonhead?
● Ms. Thing

● Working on that one, dear Thing
● Bitter Lemon

THE NANOSECOND BUYOUT

Before 2033, nobody had even heard of Damien Knight. Then one fine day at Boston's East Coast Stock Exchange, the little banks of computer warning lights began to light up like a Christmas tree on fire. Before anyone could figure out what was going on, Damien Knight was calling a meeting of the Ares Industries Board of Directors. It seemed Mr. Knight suddenly owned 22 percent of the corporation's stock—which made Damien Knight one of Ares's largest shareholders.

● I remember that day at the Exchange. I was watching over the newborn Matrix. It was like a bomb had gone off on the Exchange floor: brokers and financiers all standing around stunned and staring at the computer displays and the giant tote board that showed the fluctuations of the market. A good thirty seconds of near-total silence fell over the room—then people erupted into activity as they tried to figure out what the frag was going on. Within a couple hours, the story was out. In the space of about a minute, Damien Knight had executed more market transactions than normally happened in an hour or more of trading. And he ended up owning 22 percent of Ares Macrotechnology. I knew a lot of brokers who really wanted to shake that man's hand and find out how the hell he did it

● The Chromed Accountant

"It's all about dollars and sense"

Naturally, Leonard didn't just let Knight walk in and take his corner office. Ares's army of legal people all received priority orders to tackle the problem while Aurelius called an emergency board meeting (which Mr. Knight was most definitely *not* invited to attend). Leonard's hopes must have sunk when several shareholders failed to show, instead sending their regret and messages that they were no longer shareholders—or not significant ones, at any rate. Their shares all belonged to—you guessed it—Damien Knight.

The way the story goes, Knight put in a surprise appearance at the board meeting and wowed them so much with his style, vision and incredible chutzpah that they went along with his plan to make him CEO and chairman of the board, leaving Leonard out in the cold. Of course, the board didn't really have much choice. Even though Knight didn't control a majority share of the voting stock, he was now the majority shareholder. Also, I tend to think that the Ares board members figured someone who could pull off a stunt as incredible as the Nanosecond Buyout would take Ares places, and they were right. Knight was in and Aurelius was out—and the board's decision changed Ares forever.

Nowadays, Damien Knight and Ares seem to go together like acid and rain. Most Detroiters—except the "old-timers" and a few others like me—have forgotten the contributions of Leonard Aurelius and his father. And because Knight is so closely associated with Ares, those same Detroiters have come to see Knight as the city's savior and economic protector, best-known celebrity and, incidentally, its most eligible bachelor.

● Always wondered why Knight never got married, if only for the PR benefits. Most older corporate types go for that "family values" thing: appearing with their kids and grandkids in advertisements and in the company newsletter and drek like that. But Knight's still single as can be

● Lady Beth

● He gets much more mileage from the "dashing playboy" image, Beth. Knight is seen all the time with simstars, royalty, rock stars and other celebrities. The scandal sheets fall all over themselves to get the first pics every time the Ares CEO goes out to the theatre or to dinner. It gives the impression that Knight is young, vital and active, not old and "settled down." And you can't buy that kind of publicity.

● Spin Doctor

● On a related note, Knight doesn't seem totally uninterested in family matters. Rumor has it that he's keenly interested in cloning and bio-regeneration technology. That could mean several things beyond improving Ares' bottom line. One line of thought says Knight wants to extend his own life now that he's pushing sixty. Another says he's looking to create a child and heir, perhaps cloned from his own DNA so it'll take after him in every way. I can neither confirm nor deny such speculation.

● Doc

From his coup in 2033 until 2049, Damien Knight controlled Ares Macrotechnology completely, guiding the corp into new markets with the vigor he showed in his original conquest of Ares. Under Knight, Ares Arms grew into one of the corp's largest moneymakers and Knight started the successful Knight Errant Security subsidiary, which is now almost as well known as Ares itself.

Leonard Aurelius wasn't idle all this time, of course. Knight had managed to oust him from the positions of chairman and CEO, but Aurelius was still a major stockholder in Ares, and during those years Aurelius did everything he could to recover what Knight had taken from him. Leonard wheeled and dealed, using shells, front companies and all the other tricks of the trade to quietly acquire more Ares stock and expand his influence over other stockholders.

In 2049, Aurelius had leveraged control of enough stock to oust Knight—or so he believed—and he made his move. No one yet knows what really happened behind the closed doors of the Ares boardroom, but when the dust cleared, Damien Knight was still president/CEO and Aurelius was chairman of the board. The two men each controlled 22 percent of Ares stock, but Knight had a slight margin over his rival—two-tenths of a percent, to be exact—that enabled him to retain control of the company.

The question on everyone's mind was why Aurelius, once he had control of the board, didn't simply fire Knight and finish the job. Certainly, drekcanning his worst enemy would have given Aurelius great pleasure, so why didn't he do it? At the time, most folks assumed that neither man really had enough power to take the other out. But the events of the past year or so have shed some additional light on the matter.

Specifically, Dunkelzahn's will revealed that the dragon owned Gavilan Ventures, a holding company that controlled some 12 percent of Ares stock—one of the larger chunks. Gavilan always voted its shares by proxy, with no rhyme or reason discernible to anyone—anyone, that is, except for Knight. Knight always seemed to know how Gavilan would vote—until Aurelius's proxy coup, that is. That's when Gavilan and Dunkelzahn started playing games of a sort with the Ares board. Quite often, the dragon's shares became the deciding factor between the equally matched shareholder blocs led by Knight and Aurelius, and it seems that Dunkelzahn carefully arranged to keep the two at each others' throats for eight years—right up until he died.

◗ Makes a certain kind of twisted sense. It also explains some of Knight's disproportionate control over Ares. If he could count on Gavilan to back him, he actually had 34 percent of Ares in his pocket—a serious power base when you add in some proxies and some good political maneuvering. But how did the dragon get control of Gavilan and why did he play power games with Knight and Aurelius?
◗ Numbers

◗ Because playing power games is what dragons do, chummer. Especially the greats. It comes as easy and as naturally to them as breathing. Dunkelzahn probably thought Knight was getting a little too confident about his control over his corporation and wanted to keep him on his toes. I bet Knight was none too pleased about the dragon toying with him like that.
◗ Dragonslayer

◗ Damien Knight killed Dunkelzahn! It all makes sense! The dragon gives Knight the resources to pull off the Nanosecond Buyout (old Dunky always had a thing for Matrix tech) in exchange for a slice of the cake. For years, Knight can count on Dunky to back him up in the boardroom. Then one day, Dunky starts voting against him every now and then. Suddenly, Knight realizes that Dunky's got him by the short hairs—he realizes that Dunky could join with Aurelius and oust Knight at any time. So in 2057, Knight decides he's had enough of this drek, and the dragon disappears in a mysterious magical explosion. Frag, Knight was even at the Inaugural Ball at the Watergate.
◗ Conspir-I-See

◗ Sounds like a nice theory, chummer, but Dunky left Gavilan's stock to Nadja Daviar. And Knight had to be the last person on Earth to expect any support from her.
◗ Cobalt Blue

COLD REFUGE

Even after Knight's ouster from the chairmanship, Ares continued on pretty much the same course. Knight still oversaw the corp's day-to-day operations and devoted much of his spare time to dethroning Aurelius—just as Leo made Knight's downfall his own personal hobby.

Understandably, shadowruns within Ares started to become more common as Knight and Aurelius tried to embarrass one another. Lots of Detroit shadowfolks used to joke darkly about the fact that most work in Motor City involved Ares Macrotech as both the Johnson *and* the target—which made for some pretty hairy shadowruns sometimes, let me tell you.

A bigger headache for Ares occurred in the fall of 2055, when thousands of refugees from Chicago—which had become infested with bug spirits—began to arrive in Detroit. At first the refugees were a mere inconvenience. But as time went on, rumors of what was really going on inside the Containment Zone began to spread and competition for housing, jobs and services rose. Understandably, native Detroiters began to view the refugees with growing resentment, distrust and concern. Eventually, the mutual hostility between the two groups escalated into street violence.

Detroit's security provider—Knight Errant, of course—responded with tighter security and brutal treatment of the Chicago refugees. These measures reduced the flow of refugees into Detroit and pacified the natives, who were happy to learn that Ares was still on "their side," but the measures also earned Knight Errant and Ares the hatred of most of Detroit's refugees.

◗ Word has it that the real reason Knight Errant cracked down on the Chi-town refugees is because Knight was concerned about the possibility of bug spirits coming into "his" city along with them. KE was ordered to assume that anyone from Chicago might be a bug in disguise, so it's little wonder that KE personnel treated the refugees like sub-humans.
◗ Raid

◗ The tensions between the refugees, native Detroiters and Ares was one of the big factors that made the Detroit riots after Dunkelzahn's death some of the most violent in the country.
◗ People Watcher

◗ The refugees' opinion of Ares may be changing pretty soon with some of the stuff the corp is doing to clean up Chicago. My guess is people will be making Damien Knight out to be the savior of Chicago pretty soon, and that Ares's public approval ratings in the UCAS will soar above their already pretty high levels.
◗ Taylor

◗ Yeah, right, Ares has done so much for Chicago. Throw up a wall, pay some stooges to sit around in little guard towers (and while away the hours flippin' thru simporn mags), stage a couple show raids into the zone, then declare the problem solved and pull out. Yup, the megacorp's earned my undying gratitude and admiration—NOT!
◗ Korporate Klown

THE KINGMAKER

When Dunkelzahn decided to run for president last year, you can bet he consulted his "old buddy" Damien Knight about it. Knight is a political manipulator of the first order, and the backing of a corp like Ares is useful for anyone—dragon or no—who's aiming for the top slot of the UCAS. It's no surprise that Dunkie's running mate, Kyle Haeffner, and Damien Knight go way back. The interesting part is just how far back—and what that may mean for the UCAS.

Haeffner was an up-and-coming lawyer in Boston when he met his first wife, Alice. (Haeffner's current wife, Janet, has been married to the president for about eight years now.) If you managed to miss the newsnet and screamsheet stories on Alice, here's the skinny in a nutshell: Alice was a computer-science student at MIT&T around the same time that Haeffner was starting out his law career. The two met through mutual friends and had been married for about a year when the government recruited Alice into a top-secret program of cybernetic computer hackers who were being trained to deal with the Crash Virus. That's right, Alice Haeffner was a member of Echo Mirage, and she was one of the casualties of Echo Mirage's first major engagement with the

Crash Virus in cyberspace. She was pronounced dead by a military doctor and the regrets of the United States government were sent to her husband and family in Boston.

After Echo Mirage managed to defeat the virus and clean all traces of it from the Grid, the surviving members of the team returned to civilian life. Most of them disappeared from sight behind government-crafted identities. (The team had the resources and know-how to alter data-structures almost at will. Just imagine a world of Blue hosts and systems with no ice at all to protect them and you've got some idea of how much those early deckers could do.)

● Truth. Back then, the Matrix was just not prepared for the kind of power that a cyberdeck gave to a hacker. The EM deckers could cut through existing computer security like it wasn't even there. That's why the megacorps snatched them up and paid them to create the first intrusion counter-measures.
● FastJack

Among the members of Echo Mirage who simply vanished from sight was the team's leader: Major David Gavilan, USAF. I suspect Gavilan took his sophisticated computer knowledge to Europe and put it to work on the project that became the Nanosecond Buyout—then Gavilan emerged as Damien Knight, the new CEO and chairman of Ares Macrotech.

In the process, Knight didn't forget the people who served under him in Echo Mirage—the three other individuals who made multi-million-nuyen fortunes from Knight's Nanosecond Buyout were all connected to the Echo Mirage members who died fighting the virus. Maybe the big payoff was intended to ease Knight/Gavilan's conscience, or maybe it was some kind of hush money. I don't know about that just yet.

Unfortunately, right now I can't offer any evidence to support this theory. (Of course, if Knight really *was* David Gavilan, any evidence of his former life was probably wiped out long ago.) But the rise of Haeffner to the position of UCAS president certainly makes Knight look like a kingmaker. And if that's the case, Haeffner owes him a great big debt of gratitude.

● OK, so maybe I'm naive, but doesn't anyone find it odd that Damien Knight was named Gavilan and a part owner of Ares is Gavilan Ventures? Doesn't that make Damien Knight the winner and still champion?
● Granite
"Rock Steady"

● You didn't read Numbers' post to the end, did you? My bet is that Dunkelzahn helped in the Nanosecond Buyout and took what he wanted from Knight—and what he wanted was for Knight to jump through his hoops. Owning Gavilan Ventures was the knife in Knight's back by the Big D.
● Fro
"Leading by example"

● I rest my case.
● Conspir-I-See

● I don't get it. If Knight was in charge of the mission that killed Haeffner's wife, how come Haeffner doesn't hate Knight's guts? How come they're such buddies?
● Winger

● Not sure, chummer. It could be the money, of course, or Haeffner's successful political career, but I don't think that's it. There's something else Knight has on Haeffner, some skeleton he can threaten to expose or something else that connects the two of them. Haeffner doesn't seem like a man who's being blackmailed, but who can tell with politicians?
● Turner

THE DRAGON RIOTS

Dunkelzahn's successful campaign generated high hopes that the dragon and his vision could stop the downward slide that had gripped the UCAS ever since its formation. All those hopes disappeared in a fireball in front of the Watergate Hotel in August. Suddenly, Dunkelzahn victory parties all over the UCAS turned into violent riots. Rumors and accusations about who had geeked the dragon spread like wildfire, with everyone hanging the blame on their favorite scapegoat. The humans blamed the metahumans, the metas blamed the norms, the Awakened blamed the mundane, the Archconservatives blamed the New Centurists. The country experienced an outbreak of violence on a scale that hadn't been seen since the Night of Rage.

Some of the worst riots erupted in Detroit. Ares spin doctors had managed to generate strong support for Dunkelzahn among the

city's residents, and when news of the dragon's death reached Detroit, all hell seemed to break loose. The rioters' anger and fear over Dunkelzahn's death, their frustration with the ailing UCAS economy, their hostility toward the Chicago refugees and concern over all the other problems facing the UCAS exploded into violence.

Knight Errant riot-control teams mobilized immediately and called in additional reinforcements from Ares Arms, the corp's military branch, to help keep a lid on the situation. At the same time that his employees were putting down riots outside of his own offices, Damien Knight was in DeeCee talking with officials of the Federal District of Columbia and the hours-old Haeffner administration. The UCAS National Guard and military forces were hard-pressed to control the nationwide rioting (indeed, many rioters were blaming the UCAS government for the dragon's death), so Haeffner requested help from his old friend Knight. Knight was willing to help all right, but for a price.

After a brief conference with Nadja Daviar, Knight ordered Ares security and military forces around the UCAS to help put down the worst of the rioting. Ares APCs and LAVs ferried riot-control troops and hardware to the places where it was most needed, and Knight Errant and Ares squads fought rioters with tear gas, water cannons, sleep spells and air and water spirits—all under the watchful cameras of the newsnets. When the night of rioting was over, the worst of the damage had been contained and order was re-established, thanks to Ares Macrotechnology.

The following week, Knight called a meeting of the Ares board of directors to announce that Daviar, as inheritor of Dunkelzahn's interest in Gavilan Ventures, had agreed to sign all of her voting proxies over to him. That gave Knight an effective 34 percent control of Ares. And so Knight deposed Aurelius once again and took over as chairman of the board.

◗ My information is a bit different. The "saving of the UCAS" had nothing to do with the stock transfer other than timing. Knight knew that if he didn't help stop the violence, every megacorp would be on the horn to the Prez within minutes (my guess is, they were already on the phone while Knight was talking with Haeffner, asking if they could help in any way). Getting in close with the UCAS government has been the goal of every corp for some time, because Ares practically has a monopoly on the hearts and minds of UCAS citizens. Knight protected his interests, that's all. As for the stock transfer ... I'm still digging on that one

◗ Bull

"The best ork decker you never met"

Now Knight is firmly in control of Detroit. On the downside (for him), Ares Macrotech is more factionalized than ever. Aurelius is no doubt hatching new plans to set up Knight for the big fall. And Daviar, who harbors no love for Knight, may still find a way to regain control of Gavilan. Furthermore, lots of the smaller companies in the metroplex are trying to take advantage of Ares's internal conflicts to get a leg up or simply go about business as usual under the giant's nose. So while Knight has control of Ares and Detroit once again, holding on to it may prove quite a challenge.

WHAT'S WHERE

Detroit's street grid follows an allegedly logical layout, with major streets radiating like spokes from the central hub of the downtown district. The city's four main thoroughfares all leave the hub of the downtown area at diagonal angles. The central "spoke," Woodward Avenue, serves as the defining line between Detroit's East Side and West Side.

Though it's no match for such monster sprawls as Seattle or Dallas-Fort Worth, the Detroit metroplex covers a considerable area and has gradually incorporated most of the surrounding cities and towns under the umbrella of the Greater Detroit Metropolitan Complex. The metroplex stretches from Sterling Heights in the north, to Pontiac and Plymouth in the west and Dearborn and Wyandotte to the south. The formerly Canadian city of Windsor, on the opposite side of the Detroit River, became a district of the metroplex after the formation of the UCAS in 2032.

Detroit has a reputation for being dirty and industrial, the archetypal "Rust Belt" city filled with abandoned factories and rusting equipment. While this holds true for some parts of the metroplex, such as Auburn Hills, much of the downtown area features sleek modern and ultra-modern architecture (Ares regularly funds new construction projects to keep the corporation's "home town" looking good for the photos in its annual reports). However, older turn-of-the-century buildings in varying states of repair dominate the outlying areas of Detroit.

DOWNTOWN

Downtown Detroit, which stretches along the Detroit River opposite Windsor, is an Ares showcase through and through. Almost all of the major renovations of the city's central area have been supported, inspired or otherwise influenced by Ares Macrotechnology.

The most important landmark of the downtown area is Knight Plaza, the world headquarters of Ares Macrotech. The building began life as the renowned Hart Plaza. Not long after Ares's NASA investment began to pay off, Nicholas Aurelius purchased the building and transformed it into the company's new world headquarters. The glass and chrome structure dominates the riverside skyline and the glowing Ares logo is clearly visible at night. When Knight took control of Ares in 2033, he ordered some renovations to the headquarters building and the plaza, which was renamed Knight Plaza. The plaza now holds the Dodge Fountain and hosts the annual Ares-sponsored Detroit Jazz Festival (apparently, Knight is a long-time jazz fan).

◗ The security in Knight Plaza is not to be believed. Almost all of those landscaping and architectural "renovations" that Knight commissioned conceal sophisticated sensor equipment and some truly nasty security measures. Drek, a fragging ant can't sneeze on the grounds of the plaza without an Ares security team knowing the size of its antennae. And remember, the local "police" (Knight Errant) work for Knight, so they have no problem with any "intruder countermeasures" he wants to install. All of which makes Knight Plaza one dangerous place.

◗ RedWing

• The plaza also goes for the modern "mirror" look and makes use of a lot of mirrored and one-way glass in the building, the atriums and such. All of these mirrors are artfully crafted with one major purpose in mind: to prevent a magician from drawing a bead on anyone inside. (Knight is very conscientious about magical security on his premises.)
• Rusted Root

Getting around downtown usually means using the People Mover, an elevated-rail system that travels over the rooftops of many of the district's smaller buildings. Ares—which maintains the People Mover, naturally—has expanded the system over the years so that it now runs in a loop around the downtown area, with stops at Knight Plaza, Greektown, Bricktown, the Exhibition Center and other major hot spots. The usual fare is 2 nuyen.

Greektown started out as a community of Greek immigrants in the 1880s. It grew rapidly when Detroit became a major industrial center and is now a popular meeting, shopping and entertainment district. The area features the International Center for Apparel Design, which showcases the work of some of the world's most noted fashion designers; restored historical buildings; bazaar shopping and old Greek Orthodox churches; and a bronze statue of the Greek god Ares that bears a passing resemblance to Damien Knight (the statue was donated by—you guessed it—Ares Macrotechnology). The area is best known for its Greek, Cajun and other ethnic restaurants—which are some of the best in Detroit.

• Greektown's also home to a small number of pagan nature magicians who follow the ancient Greek gods as idols in ways similar to many magicians in Europe. These pagans follow Pan Artemis and Dionysus as the Horned God, the Moon Maiden and the Wild Huntsman, among others, and routinely call on the magical powers of the Old World
• Thessaly

• Thessaly makes things sound a bit grander than they are. In truth, the Greek pagan movement in Detroit is a small one, probably not more than a half-dozen shamans (or whatever they call themselves) and two or three times that in people who attend their rituals and worship services. A small magical group, but no more significant than any other ritual circle in the city
• River Rat

A ways up Windsor on the West Side lies a collection of corporate towers that includes the world headquarters of General Motors and the art deco Fisher Building. General Motors is one of the most powerful corporations in Detroit, but they're still second-tier at best and no match for big boy Ares down the road. That doesn't mean that the boys and girls at GM aren't active in the shadow-scene—they just know enough to give Ares a wide berth. Of course, the GM people don't hesitate to mess with the folks at Ford down in neighboring Dearborn.

• Generally speaking, GM and Ford get along pretty well for major corporations. They try to maintain a "unified front" against

automakers from outside the UCAS, but plenty of shadowrunning and skullduggery goes on behind the facade of cooperation. They just keep it as quiet as possible.
◗ Grand Prix

Downtown Detroit also contains Tiger Stadium (for baseball) and Ares Stadium (for football, soccer and other "big" sports), the Joe Louis Arena and Knight Hall. A good collection of theaters are also located downtown, including the restored Fox Theatre, which is more than one hundred twenty years old. The Fox is also the world headquarters for the "Street Pizza" chain of fast-food restaurants (owner and pizza-czar Dan Illitch helps maintain the theatre in all its old-world glory). Other downtown sights include museums, the Renaissance Center, the Detroit Opera House and plenty of cultural drek, all heavily supported by local corporations. (Knight seems particularly fond of the Opera House and attends performances there fairly regularly.)

◗ Knight also uses his private box at the opera to discuss business with his guests from time to time. If Knight wants a meeting with someone outside of Ares's offices, he's likely to arrange it at the opera. Good reason to have a nice suit on hand or at least know where you can get one. Just keep in mind that you may be seen with him and pegged as a shadow operative; that may just be what he wants, so be careful
◗ Eastman

◗ What drek. Knight doesn't pull games like that. Ares has always played it straight with me and everyone I've worked with. If you got fragged over on an Ares run, it's probably your own fault.
◗ Code-Rider

◗ Excuse me—Knight not play games? That man is the gamemaster of all time, that's how he keeps the power he has. Every interaction with Knight is like a complex chess game of move and countermove. I used to work for him, too—until I figured out how Knight was playing with people's lives. Knight's a puppetmaster; trust him for a minute and you'll end up over your head in the deep dark stuff
◗ Errant Knight

A short distance east of downtown lies the Rivertown district, which stretches along the Detroit River facing Belle Isle. Rivertown contains shops, small offices, restaurants, bars and tourist attractions—along with a few "specialty shops" where shadowrunners can buy weapons and other illegal gear, no questions asked. Rivertown, along with Greektown, is a good area for gathering information about comings and going in downtown.

◗ Any visiting shadowrunner looking for weaponry, ammo, armor and the like will want to stop by Nugent's Hunting and Sporting Goods in Rivertown. It don't look like much from the outside—drek, it don't look like much from the inside either, cuz all the goodies are stashed away in the basement. As long as you don't act like a hoophole, Boscoe will set you up with whatever you need. And don't mind the three cyber-enhanced pit bulls lying around the store. They won't mess with you unless you mess with Boscoe—usually, anyway.
◗ Razorback

◗ If you just wanna get the skinny on the local shadowscene, the MoTo-a-Go-Go is a good place to start. The Go-Go used to be a happenin' little dance club—it's still got the hanging cages where the featured dancers used to shake their hoops—but the tourists and the fashionable young corp types abandoned it for swankier places years ago. The Go-Go's gotten progressively seedier with time, and now the only people who hang there are shadow types, chipheads, long-forgotten rockers and other assorted phreaks—which makes it an ideal place for talkin' biz.
◗ Skanky Wanky

BELLE ISLE

Situated in the Detroit River between the downtown area and Windsor, Belle Isle is the largest island surrounded entirely by a city in North America. Since the founding of Detroit, much of the island has been preserved as a park and nature reserve. Ares bought control of the island from the city government in 2036 and continues to administer all of Belle Isle's tourist attractions—which provides Ares with a lot of good PR for its "civic-minded" attitude.

The Isle also contains several marinas for boating and yachting on the lake and the river. Knight and plenty of Ares execs take yachting trips out from the Isle on pleasant days in the spring and summer, along with many of the well-to-do in the city.

The most popular attractions on Belle Isle are the Belle Isle Zoo and the Aquarium, which both feature wide ranges of animal specimens. Ares has expanded the facilities of both the zoo and the aquarium, adding many new exhibits featuring paranormal animals, including a live phoenix, several hellhounds, a torpedo shark and other exotic creatures.

Policlubs such as the People for the Ethical Treatment of the Awakened have protested the inclusion of a pair of nagas in the zoo's collection, claiming rights of sentience for them. So far Ares has made no move to release the nagas, which seem quite content in their maintained environment, casting the occasional illusion spell for tourists and children. Likewise, the aquarium includes a trio of "domesticated" storm dolphins, which were raised from specimens captured in the North Sea by aquarium marine biologists. The policlubs have threatened violence against the zoo and aquarium facilities, but security on the Isle is fairly tight, with unobtrusive Knight Errant patrols everywhere.

◗ The zoo and the aquarium provide Ares with an additional benefit that has come in handy in recent years. Both facilities have fairly aggressive parazoological studies programs that net Ares gigapulses of data on various paranimal species each year. Ares uses this data to breed and train paranormal guard animals, and also in its magical research and development programs. From what I understand, those programs were neglected when Aurelius was in charge of the board, but they're now fully staffed and funded—so don't be surprised if Ares and Knight Errant security teams make increased use of biologicals in the future.
◗ Errant Knight

WINDSOR

Even in the pre-UCAS days, the district of Windsor had a cordial, almost symbiotic, relationship with Detroit. The two cities were connected by the first underwater tunnel between two nations, the Detroit-Windsor Tunnel, which runs from downtown Detroit to the Casino Windsor. Detroit residents and tourists regularly made their way across the Detroit River to take advantage of the favorable monetary exchange rate in the Canadian city and to gamble in Windsor's casinos.

When Union Day came and the remains of the United States and Canada merged to form the United Canadian American States, Windsor was happy to join up with Detroit, though some individuals worried that the dissolution of the border between the two cities would hurt Windsor's tourist trade. So to preserve Windsor's "economic character," the city government petitioned the UCAS government to keep gambling legal in Windsor and maintain prohibitions against organized gambling in Detroit proper.

The tactic worked, and Windsor's change in status to UCAS city had a negligible effect on its economy. Over time, Windsor became increasingly dependent on the Detroit city government for services and administration, while Detroit's government became increasingly dependent on the tax revenues generated by Windsor's thriving casinos. In 2036, Windsor officially became part of the Greater Detroit Metropolitan Complex.

Windsor's economy is based primarily around tourism and entertainment. The city features several major casinos such as the Windsor Casino, the Windsor Raceway and the Northern Belle Casino, which is based on a riverboat permanently docked in the Detroit River. The Windsor Casino features modern, high-tech games along with the traditional gambling diversions of poker, blackjack and roulette. The Northern Belle features more of an "old world" charm and style with fewer electronic and virtual games. Both casinos and the raceway are popular with corporate high-rollers and wage slaves looking to feel like high-rollers.

● Both casinos are heavily tied to the Detroit Mafia, which owes its allegiance to the Chicago families. Since Chi-town is still being fumigated, the Motor City Mob answers to the McCaskill Family in Milwaukee—at least for now. I've heard rumors that Don Roland "The Greek" Stephanopoulos might be looking to make a case that he should be in control of Mafia operations in the midwest
● Cutter

● Doubt it. The authorities give the Family free rein to run the casinos in Windsor, but Knight Errant has made it clear that Detroit proper is off limits. So in Motor City, the Mafia has to keep its operations low-key. Whenever the local mobsters get a bit careless, Ares and KE make a big show of breaking up the latest "powerful criminal ring." That effectively keeps Stephanopoulos from building any considerable power base in Detroit, let alone expanding his influence.
● Errant Knight

● Mob leaders haven't decided what the fate of the Chicago Mob will be now that the bugs are getting cleared out. The McCaskills are still technically in charge of Chicago operations, but there's a power vacuum developing in the Chi-town underworld and there's a vacant spot on the Commissione—both of which must look very tempting to The Greek. (Ares has pretty much stopped him from becoming a big man in Detroit, and Chicago could be his big chance to make a name for himself.) If he does decide to make a move, we'll likely see a Mob war between the Detroit and Milwaukee outfits for control of the Chicago rackets. And that might force the Commissione to step in and put a stop to things
● RisingSon

Although most Windsor residents didn't shed any tears over becoming a UCAS city, some thought they were better off as Canadian citizens and feel they've gotten the short end of the stick from the UCAS deal. Most of these separatists are members of the True Canadians, a fringe political group that agitates for the re-establishment of Windsor as an independent city rather than a district of the Detroit Metroplex, and advocates more representation for the former Canadian provinces and cities within the UCAS government. Most folks ignore the True Canadians, but they seem to come out of the woodwork with placards and paid political announcements at election time.

● A few former True Canadians have formed a smaller group of their own—the First Canadians—to push their call for the secession of the former Canadian provinces (some want to reunite the provinces with Quebec). The First Canadians regularly cause trouble for UCAS officials in Detroit, and rumor has it that they were behind an attempt to bomb the Federal Building in Detroit. The First Canadians may or may not be working with the Quebec Unité movement, depending on who you ask.
● Hazard

● Not only that, Hazard old chum, but a little bird told me that Ares has been secretly funneling "stolen" hardware to the radical First Canadians. Seems Knight wants to use these skags to support the Quebec Unité movement and disrupt the Quebecois government for some reason
● Loon-E-Toon

● I can sum up that reason for you in three words, chummers: Cross Applied Technologies. Knight and Lucien Cross have a feud going between them, and making Cross's life miserable has become one of Knight's new "hobbies." Quebec's tariffs and trade restrictions on UCAS goods help Cross Corp and hurt Ares. So messing with the stability of the Quebec government is another way for Knight to mess with Cross. Plus, I think Knight just has fun messing with the Quebecois.
● Errant Knight

DEARBORN

The district of Dearborn, west of the center of Detroit, is dominated by Ford Motor Company Inc. (The corporate giant maintains its world headquarters on the site where company founder Henry Ford built the first automobile.) The main corporate offices are located in the Ford Building on Michigan Avenue (the locals

call it the "Glass House," because its century-old design reflects a vision of a future that never came).

Even though Ares rules Detroit, Dearborn is Ford Motor's own little fiefdom within Knight's neo-feudal kingdom. The majority of Dearborn residents are employed in one way or another by Ford, and they display a fierce loyalty to their employer that is rare among today's wage slaves. (Driving a non-Ford vehicle immediately marks a visitor as an outsider—the locals can't conceive of driving anything other than a Ford. In fact, the Ford Americar, still going strong since the release of the first one back in the '40s, is once of the most common passenger vehicles on the roads of Dearborn and elsewhere in Detroit.)

Ford also cooperates with Ares on many different levels, and both Ford and GMC help support and supply Ares Arms with military-grade vehicles such as the GMC Banshee, jeeps, and even armored personnel carriers. Though relations between the two automotive giants and Ares are cordial and mutually profitable on the surface, the competition for lucrative Ares contracts can become quite fierce between GMC and Ford, and the two corps regularly use shadowrunners to subtly sabotage one another's operations or gauge internal political developments at Ares.

❶ This competition spills over into Ares, too. Ford and GMC supporters within Ares have been known to "take sides" when it comes to contract bidding wars between Ford and GMC, and sometimes sponsor shadowruns to make sure that "their" company gets a contract. There's also a small group within Ares that wants to farm out some of the work to a third company such as Chrysler-Nissan or Federated-Boeing. But these guys have to move carefully to avoid upsetting the delicate balance that Ares maintains by tossing contract bones to GMC and Ford to keep them happy
❶ Web-Walker

❶ I've pulled down runs against both Ford and GMC, and let me tell you, these corps don't just deal in cars anymore. Cars may still be both corps' bread and butter, but the major money is tied up in those nice, fat government contracts that Ares is now negotiating with the UCAS and other countries. And that's why both Ford and GMC are conducting some serious research in high-tech engine design, military hardware, drones and robotics. With that kind of investment, you know they'll fight to the death to get a piece of the Ares action
❶ Drive55

❶ I think Knight actually fosters the competition between Ares's subcontractors as much as he fosters competition between the different divisions within Ares. Some people may claim he does so because competition is good for business (it keeps prices down and makes for strong corporate partners and all that warm wet drek), but I personally believe Knight simply enjoys stirring up the anthill and watching all the little critters fight it out amongst themselves
❶ Crystal Dancer

OAKLAND COUNTY

Oakland County, north of downtown Detroit, is a divided place. The western and southern portions of Oakland are fairly prosperous, filled with many offbeat, "artsy" neighborhoods. The northeastern portion of Oakland, however, is economically devastated Auburn Hills. The so-called Auburn Blight is home to many Chicago refugees, as well as the dregs and outcasts of Detroit society. The western Oaklanders do their best to ignore the east side and keep the area's decay and depression out of their districts.

Royal Oak, south of the worst of the Blight, is one of the hippest places in the area, an offbeat/funky/plain weird community full of coffeehouses, street-corner artists and philosophers, restaurants and nightlife, mystics of every shade (both genuine and fake) and plenty of young people, especially the theatre crowd. It's a good place to shop for some magical talent or check out some of the lore stores, I'm told, but you'd better be able to tell the real thing from some of the junk that gets sold from carts and storefronts in the area. I don't know a magical talisman from a hole in the ground, so I just leave the shopping to chummers who know what to look for.

❶ Echo that. There are a few good lorestores in Royal Oak, like Fantasia's off of Rochester, but for every one that has worthwhile merchandise, there's another four that sell magical-looking drek to the tourists and the magical wannabe crowd. Don't let any of the hawkers on the street sell you on the power of any of the "magical charms" they're selling for 10 to 20 nuyen a pop, either. Those charms may be just the thing to accessorize your new outfit, but they're useless from a magical standpoint.
❶ Silver Stranger

❶ Another good source for magical junk in Oakland is actually the Detroit Zoo off of Route 696. If you know the right people in the zoo, you can sometimes get some wizzer telesma from when one of the Awakened specimens kicks off or sheds or otherwise takes care of its business. I got some virgin griffin feathers that way that made for a wiz focus. Some of the better talismongers in Royal Oak and Detroit have some connections with the zoo and might be able to put you in touch with the right people—for a price, of course.
❶ Greyhawk

Oakland contains one of Detroit's four major sports arenas. The Pistons dribble and pass at the Palace in the outskirts of Auburn Hills. The complex serves as something of a "border" between the nicer areas of Oakland and the Auburn Blight—the sports franchise brings in considerable revenue for the area and helps keep the rest of Oakland from following the route of Auburn. The Pistons haven't been a major force in the NBA for decades now, but Detroit fans are quite loyal to their teams and the Palace still packs them in.

Strangely enough, combat biking hasn't caught on in Detroit and the city doesn't have its own franchise. Most people blame this on the fact that Detroiters prefer cars to bikes and would rather go to a road race or demolition derby than to a combat biker game.

One new sport that has caught on in Detroit is Urban Brawl, which is played in some of the most devastated areas of the Auburn Blight, particularly in some of the abandoned Chrysler facilities, as well as the long-abandoned Silverdome in Pontiac. In fact, the Detroit Nightmares have a reputation as one of the most vicious and aggressive Urban Brawl teams in the North American League. Most of the team's players hail from Auburn, and they're willing to do whatever it takes to leave behind their lives in that urban hell. And the survival skills they've picked up on the streets of the Blight make the Nightmares major contenders each year.

◗ The Nightmares are best on their home turf, but they adapt pretty well to most anyone else's playing field. The team has earned almost as many game penalties as the Tenochtitlan Volcanoes, but the Nightmares seem to have more of a sense of humor about it than the Azzies do. Ares doesn't openly sponsor any of the Nightmares' games, but rumor has it that Ares Arms does occasionally "test out" some minor weapon improvements and enhancements on the team from time to time, as long as said weapon improvements and enhancements fall within the rules of the Brawling League. Someone could score a look at what's coming next from Ares Arms if they could get close enough to the team to snag a couple of prototypes.
◗ Lineman

◗ Truth is, Ares *does* sponsor the Nightmares, but through less overt means than it uses to support some of the other Detroit sports franchises. The name "Nightmare" itself is just another play on Knight's name, a joke that's gotten pretty old, if you ask me.
◗ Au-N Boy

◗ Not so, Golden Boy. Most chummers just *think* that every Ares subsidiary has either "Ares" or "Knight" in the name somewhere, but that's misdirection on a grand scale. Little projects like Knight Errant allow Knight to create the impression that his ego is so huge he can't be involved in something without leaving his signature all over it. People start to think that about Ares, and then Knight can run all kinds of shows from behind the scenes without anyone suspecting because the "telltale" signs of his involvement aren't there. The reverse is also true—just because something has a Greek-myth or "Knight/Night" motif doesn't mean that Knight is involved in it. Knight's got more smarts than to pull something that obvious.
◗ Errant Knight

◗ Well, that's what I'd expect *you* to say, Errant.
◗ Au-N Boy

THE AUBURN BLIGHT

Auburn Hills was formerly home to the world headquarters of Chrysler Corporation, the third of the "Big Three" car manufacturers in North America. Now it's a twisted shadow of its former self, an economic dustbowl inhabited by castoffs and refugees, a blight on Knight's little corporate paradise.

Chrysler Corporation once supported the economy of the area in much the same way that Ford supports Dearborn. The company employed most of the local residents and poured money back into the region through tax revenues and public works. When Chrysler became embroiled in a takeover war with Nissan Corporation in Japan in 2038, however, it was the beginning of the end for Auburn. Chrysler overreached itself and Nissan proceeded to force the company into a very bad position. For a while it looked like Nissan would buy out Chrysler in a takeover, but the company's executives held some last-minute talks with Nissan and the two companies hammered out a merger agreement to form Chrysler-Nissan.

The merger saved Chrysler Corporation, but the corporation's North American headquarters was moved to San Francisco. The headquarters building and facilities in Auburn were simply shut down and the vast majority of the employees dismissed, except for the upper levels of management, who were relocated along with their families.

The closure of the Detroit Chrysler facilities devastated Auburn, plunging it into a depression from which it has not emerged. In the past twenty years, the neighborhood has gone increasingly downhill, and these days some consider it beyond reclaiming. At the very least, a great deal of work would have to be put into rebuilding the area's infrastructure and economy, tasks that most corporations simply don't want to bother with.

Like the Barrens of Seattle, San Francisco and Boston, civil and corporate security forces subscribe to a "containment policy" for policing Auburn. Rather than trying to keep crime off the streets—which would leave the streets pretty empty, if you ask me—Knight Errant and other security forces instead try to keep the crime inside the area and prevent the blight from spreading, so to speak. So far, this policy seems to be paying off. Over the past ten years, private service contracts to neighborhood associations and similar groups in Oakland County have increased by some 35 percent as residents become more willing to pay a monthly premium to keep crime from the Blight from spilling over into their neighborhoods. The largest provider of private security services in the area is HardCorps Inc., owned by—you guessed it—Ares Macrotechnology.

◗ The Blight may be a dark stain on Knight's little corporate empire in Detroit, but in some ways it's a bonus for Ares. Such a dangerous, crime-ridden area provides Ares subsidiaries like Knight Errant and HardCorps with plenty of opportunities to show law-abiding Detroiters how well Ares is protecting them from the "bad elements" out there. The Blight also provides a nice little preserve where all of Detroit's important shadow elements can thrive in their "natural habitat" until some Ares Johnson needs to hire a bit of reasonably skilled, disposable talent for a job (most of the gangs and other people in the Blight are desperate enough to cack their own mothers for a couple of nuyen).
◗ The Green Machine

Most of the inhabitants of the Blight are those who cannot afford to live elsewhere and become trapped in the economic cycle of the area. They say that once you're in the Blight—whether born there or forced into it by circumstance—there's only one sure way out: in a body bag. Some people in the Blight turn to working for the Mafia dealing beetles, running the shadows or

maybe even trying out for the Nightmares Urban Brawl team. But most people have neither hope nor opportunity for escape. And that makes for a desperate, dangerous population.

◗ The atmosphere of despair and decay in the Blight is so strong that many areas of astral space within it are tainted by those emotions and become toxic city domains. I know for a fact that most of the rusting remains of the old Chrysler facilities have become toxic, and rumor has that a circle of toxic street shamans in the Blight are attempting to spread the area's pall of despair into the rest of the city. If that's true, Ares's efforts to contain the Blight will eventually fail.
◗ Greyhawk

◗ I don't know about Greyhawk's "circle," but I do know that one time some chummers and I ran up against the Rusted Heart gang in the Blight. The gang's leader had some kind of talisman around his neck—some kinda weird piece of bent, rusted metal—that let him call on this spirit that looked like a couple of rusted and burned-out car wrecks welded into a human shape by a crazy sculptor. Our mage said it was definitely some kind of toxic city spirit, so it might be some crazy shaman is trading magical help to the gangs in exchange for some muscle.
◗ EdgeRunner

The newest inhabitants of the Blight are the Chicago refugees. When the Chi-town Containment Zone first went up, many people fled Chicago believing that there was a new VITAS epidemic. When the truth leaked out that the city was actually threatened by giant insects, even more people left Chicago for nearby cities such as Milwaukee and Detroit.

Several thousand refugees fled to Detroit, swelling the city's population and increasing the overcrowding in areas like the Blight. As if tensions weren't bad enough, most Detroiters assumed (and still do) that the Chicagoans were somehow infected by the insect spirits. And when Dunkelzahn died, many of those same Detroiters assumed that bug spirits were behind the assassination—that's why the mobs killed refugees during the riots that followed.

WHO'S WHO

Detroit has been the focus of a lot of action lately. It's all just under the surface, so it's not as easy to spot as it is in places like Seattle. But it's there, believe me. If you're going to do business in the shadows of Detroit, it pays to know who's out to frag who this week. If you can keep track of the players, you might be able to work the shadows without ending up taking the rap in one of the power games folks like to play around here.

DAMIEN KNIGHT

What can I say that hasn't already been said about Damien Knight? If you want to run the shadows of Detroit, then you have to learn a bit about Damien Knight—Mister Numero Uno, CEO and Chairman of the Board of Ares Macrotechnology, puppetmaster, schemer and manipulator extraordinaire. Very little happens in Detroit without his notice, and most of what does happen is part of his designs.

Knight's background is pretty well covered in the History section of this file. Whether or not the speculation there is true, Knight is clearly not the Ares CEO's real name. There are virtually no records of Knight from before 2033, apart from some birth records and a SIN registration that a man of Knight's resources could easily have forged—especially if Knight was the man who created the first true decker team.

According to his own records, Knight was born in 1999. He looks no more than 39 years old, however, and he hasn't aged significantly since he first appeared in public twenty-five years ago. That lends credence to the rumors that Knight is the beneficiary of regular antigeria and leonization treatments that cost somewhere in the neighborhood of two to three million nuyen a year—a nice chunk of nuyen for sure, but little more than a drop in the bucket for a man who controls the fifth largest megacorporation in the world.

Nobody knows if Knight has any cyber-modifications. He certainly doesn't have any visible ones. Knight prefers to handle all of his office work and the like through a computer terminal, and he rarely puts in appearances in the Matrix, handling most of his other business by vidphone calls. On the other hand, Knight must have some of the finest programming skills in the world—remember, he's the man who masterminded the Nanosecond Buyout, still one of the most amazing pieces of coordinated computer programming ever done.

Undoubtedly, Knight is a capable and aggressive administrator. He created many of Ares's diverse subdivisions and subsidiaries, such as AresArms and Knight Errant, and he has continued to support the highly lucrative AresSpace division. His management style tends to pit many of the company's lower-ranked

• It's true! The bugs were behind it all. They've infiltrated the government! General Yeats was one of them, and when the government took him out the bugs tried to take over. Chicago is only the beginning! They're not dead, just going into hiding. Ares can't kill them, they're *insects*. They can take anything we throw at them and come back for more. It's only a matter of time, chummers
• Survivor@mw.milw.ucas

• This board gets crazier every day. The bugs are done, chummer Yeats was a last gasp and Chicago is under control. The main hives have been exposed and destroyed. Now's the time to start rebuilding and taking care of the ones that are left.
• Skeptic

• I don't know about that, Skeptic. I've heard things that make me think maybe some bugs or insect shamans *did* leave Chicago when the Wall went up and migrated to other cities to start new nests. There's been an increase in unexplained disappearances in the Auburn area since the refugees arrived (naturally, KE isn't doing anything about it because they won't go into the Blight with anything less than a Firewatch team). Sure, you could chalk it up to increased violence in the area, maybe it's gangs or Greyhawk's toxic shamans—but if it's something else, we could all find ourselves in some deep drek very soon.
• RedWing

execs against each other, forcing them to compete for resources and the attention and favor of the CEO. This adversarial process has strengthened Ares operations by weeding out the less competent/ruthless execs and rewarding the more cutthroat types, but it also makes Ares execs more territorial and less cooperative than their counterparts in other corps.

◗ Knight also has a real penchant for pet projects. Knight Errant was—and still is—Knight's baby all the way, along with certain divisions such as AresArms. Knight tends to get very involved in a particular project, division or subsidiary for a while, driving the division head crazy by looking over his or her shoulder and doing a lot of backseat driving. Then he loses interest and moves on to something else. Of course, he's never seemed to lose interest in certain projects, such as KE, but it's anyone's guess how long a particular division will draw Mr. Knight's personal attention.
◗ Eagle-One

◗ Knight is also utterly ruthless and without any trace of human decency. Ares is well known for doing whatever it takes to get ahead in the cutthroat megacorporate shark tank, and Knight is among the hungriest of the sharks swimming in it. Any sign of weakness and he'll rip an enemy apart, leaving them to bleed once he has what he wants. Anyone who trusts Knight for a second is a fool, and so is anyone who works for him
◗ Neon Samurai

◗ Still around, Neon? I'm impressed that your vendetta against Ares hasn't gotten you killed yet.
◗ Findler-Man

◗ Knight is a corporate CEO who actually cares about the people that his company provides for. He has sponsored numerous charitable trusts and foundations, both in Detroit and all over the world. Ares security forces were the first to respond to the needs of the UCAS government in a time of crisis and Ares products help to make the world a safer place for us all. The ravings of a paranoid mind don't change those facts
◗ Nightfire

◗ OK. I just shut down yet another argument between Neon Samurai and Nightfire. Once you chummers get out of the ShadowCell, take your personal problems into a private link, *so ka*?
◗ Captain Chaos
Transmitted: 24 March at 14:47:08 (EST)

◗ Nightfire works for Ares and Neon Samurai says that Ares killed his father, so I tend to believe that the truth about Mr. Knight lies somewhere between their two extreme views. But if I were you, I'd take Neon's advice just to be on the safe side.
◗ Findler-Man

LEONARD AURELIUS

The heir to the Aurelius family fortune, Leonard takes after his father—corporate shark and deal-maker Nicholas Aurelius—in more ways than one. Unfortunately, Aurelius *fils* didn't seem to inherit daddy's ability to hold on to control of Ares Macrotechnology for more than a few years at a time.

Aurelius is 57, a bit younger than Damien Knight, but he doesn't carry his age quite as well. He was a 29-year-old University of Chicago graduate and business-world golden boy when he took over the position of chairman of the board of Ares Macrotechnology. But Leonard worked for Ares from the time he was old enough to hold down a job—his father strongly believed in having his son work his way up through the ranks. In fact, young Aurelius even held down an office job with an Ares Chicago division the entire time he was in school. By the time Nicholas was ready to retire, he believed he was leaving his company in good hands with his son.

◗ That's not what I've heard. I heard old Nick was a real fragger who rode his son pretty hard and didn't trust *anyone* with his precious company. The way I hear it, the old man put Leonard in charge just so he could take a year or two off for some rejuvenation therapy and then come back and reclaim the big chair. Pity he suffered a fatal heart attack before that could happen, eh?
◗ Bitter Lemon

Though Aurelius guided Ares quite competently during his first three years as board chairman, he didn't take nearly as many risks as his father had. Generally, the board approved of that conservative approach, except when it came to expanding Ares's operations. Apparently, some directors felt that Aurelius suppressed too many ideas that could have been successful for the megacorp.

◗ Leonard Aurelius is the main reason that Ares is still only the Number Five megacorp. Nicholas had the corp on the fast track to the top, but Leonard put on the brakes and slowed a lot of operations. That gave other corps time to catch up and even pass Ares.
◗ CC Raider

◗ I disagree, my friend. Most of the passing you're talking about came from Knight's takeover. He spent a few years consolidating his hold over Ares, picking out new furniture for his corner office and setting up his own little pet projects such as Knight Errant, and probably a thousand others we never heard of. And *that* is when some of the other corps started to gain on Ares.
◗ Pirate

Ever since Knight took over Ares in '33, Aurelius has had only one purpose in life: to regain control of Ares and see Knight tossed out on his hoop, preferably a broken man. Aurelius worked for years to prepare the proxy coup that put him back in the chairman position in '49, and now he's lost the job to Knight once again—which you can bet is a major stick in his craw. It's no secret that Knight doesn't much like Aurelius, either, but he can't get rid of him because Aurelius still owns enough stock to make him a major shareholder in the corporation, entitled to sit on the board and vote even if he isn't the chairman. In fact, Knight's new position as chairman means that he now sees Aurelius more than ever at board meetings and other Ares functions.

Unlike Knight, Aurelius is a family man. He met his wife, Susan, in Chicago and the couple has three children: Nicholas (age 25), Sharon (age 23) and Evelynn (age 19). Nicholas is a manager with AresArms; Sharon, a programmer with Ares' Matrix-services division. Evelynn is a "wild child" who plays lead guitar with the Detroit band Unholy Machine under the stage name "Eve Night"—no "K"—which hacks off her father no end and probably really amuses ol' Damien.

● All of the Aurelius kids have bodyguards who watch them all the time—except for Eve, who throws a fit to daddy every once in a while and gets her private protection withdrawn or simply ditches her bodyguards altogether. Aurelius is pretty paranoid that someone will try to use his family against him, though Damien Knight has never seemed to try.
● Falsworth

● Think so, Falsy? Interesting, then, that Aurelius's bodyguards are contracted from Eagle Security instead of Ares, Knight Errant or HardCorps, the major security providers in the metroplex. Why? Because those sec-forces all answer, in one way or another, to Knight. It's pretty obvious who Aurelius is protecting his family from
● December Rain

● I tend to give Knight more credit than to go for something as obvious as a kidnapping ploy. Why should he bother? For one thing, he *is* in control of Ares and Aurelius is only a minor concern at the moment. And two out of three of the Aurelius kids work for his corporation, with Number One Son practically under his personal supervision. I figure it's only a matter of time before Nicholas II and Sharon think that Knight is the greatest thing since trideo and that their father is just a bitter old man. Subvert the enemy from within.
● Cobalt Blue

● So what's Aurelius going to do to regain control of the Ares board? Anyone know?
● Q-bert

ROGER SOARING-OWL

Roger Soaring-Owl is the CEO of Knight Errant Security, Knight's pet project and—supposedly—a good buddy of the Ares CEO. A contemporary of Knight, Soaring-Owl is and has been in charge of KE since Knight started the Ares subsidiary more than twenty years ago. He has proved an able, albeit unspectacular, administrator for the corporation since that time, keeping Knight Errant on an even keel.

● Truth is, Soaring-Owl is nothing more than a puppet in charge of KE. Knight handles almost all of the subsidiary's administration personally and the company's long-time employees know who their real boss is. Soaring-Owl's abilities as an administrator are somewhere between slim and none, but he comes off looking good because of Knight's able control over Knight Errant.
● Errant Knight

Like many of Knight's top advisors and "inner circle," Soaring-Owl has a military background. During the time of the Ghost Dance Rebellion, a young Soaring-Owl and his family were moved from their home to a "re-education camp" in the southwest, where they spent several months living under some of the most terrible conditions imaginable. When the Great Ghost Dance began to spread out from the southwest, Soaring-Owl and his family were freed from the camp and joined up with the Ghost Dancers.

After the Treaty of Denver, 16 year-old Soaring-Owl joined the Sioux Defense Forces of the newly formed Native American Nations (a lot of recruits' ages were overlooked in those days, especially when they were already veterans of one war for their nation). He trained as a fighter pilot and served in the Sioux Air Force. Soaring-Owl's military record isn't terribly noteworthy—he handled his duties well and honorably and was an efficient, if unspectacular, administrator and commanding officer later in his military career.

It's unclear to me how Knight and Soaring-Owl became acquainted, but it seems most likely that they met through their military contacts. As near as I can put it together, the two of them, though serving different nations with opposed interests, gained a respect for each other from their occasional confrontations. When Knight was setting up Knight Errant after his takeover of Ares, he managed to lure Soaring-Owl away from his military career and into the top slot for Knight's new security company.

● The way I hear it, Soaring-Owl left the Sioux Nation for reasons other than a better salary and pension benefits with Ares. Some friends of mine in the Sioux Defense Forces say that Soaring-Owl was actually a spy selling secrets to the UCAS government and that none other than Maj. David Gavilan (a.k.a. Damien Knight) was one of his contacts. When Gavilan dropped out of sight and became Knight, he didn't forget his old friends. He used his influence to pull Soaring-Owl out and placed him under Ares's protection before the authorities caught up with him
● Wild Brave

● Interesting story, Brave, but I tend to doubt that Soaring-Owl was tied up in anything as shady as that. He doesn't seem to have the *cojones* for it, if you ask me. Not to mention that the Sioux have the Truth Dancers, secret service shamans who can read your fraggin' mind and spirit to find out if you're a spy or not. You can bet they caught a lot of UCAS spies in those early days. It'd be a miracle if Soaring-Owl managed to fool them and the rest of the Defense Forces for that many years
● Donovan

● Interestingly enough, many of Knight Errant's personnel come from the NAN and are recruited from military outfits such as the Sioux Defense Forces. Captain Anne Ravenheart, who leads an elite KE Firewatch team, is a Sioux military alumnus, as is Captain Tyler Climbing-Bear. I suspect Soaring-Owl gets his kicks by stealing away some of the NAN's better military people with promises of fatter salaries and benefits after the NAN has invested money and effort in training them
● Walks-In-Shadow

◗ Maybe, but KE recruits from non-NAN militaries just as much as from other security corps and corporate security divisions. Knight Errant has a reputation for stealing away the best and brightest from just about everywhere.
◗ Everett

A few words about Knight Errant are appropriate here. KE is a subsidiary of Ares Macrotech, which means the two function as separate entities—at least on paper. In truth, Knight Errant is Knight's baby all the way and he is up-to-date with nearly everything that happens concerning that company. Soaring-Owl can't even visit the can without a say-so from Knight's office. For practical purposes, KE is more of a branch or subdivision than a subsidiary, and everyone knows it.

Knight Errant is private security firm, much like Lone Star Security Services, Eagle Security and similar but smaller corps such as HardCorps (also owned by Ares), Wolverine and the like. KE holds police-security contracts in some metroplexes like Detroit and Boston, and owns part of the contract for New York City. It also provides for-hire security services to corporations and private parties who can pay its fees. Plenty of corporations hire Knight Errant for private security when they need a little extra muscle because of the company's excellent rep. Even the UCAS government has started to employ Knight Errant on a limited basis for additional security on government sites and for important bigwigs.

So why is KE so important to Knight? I've been keeping an eye on Knight for a long time and I think I have a pretty good theory. Knight is an ambitious man, and I don't think his ambitions stop with gaining control of Ares Macrotech. He wants his megacorp to become even more powerful. To achieve that, Ares must battle the competition for more control, more market-share, more customers and more money. As any soldier or corporate raider knows, a basic maxim of strategy is "know thine enemy." And when you're going up against powerful megacorps such as Saeder-Krupp, you'd better know your enemy very well.

That's where Knight Errant comes in. KE is one of the best-trained and equipped private security forces in the world. That alone makes it a tremendous asset to an up-and-coming corp like Ares looking to claw its way to the top. Add to that the fact that Knight Errant has lucrative security contracts with many different metroplexes, corporations and national governments. That adds up to a lot of influence as well as a lot of inside information on how those different parties think, act and function. And all that information crosses Knight's desk in KE's daily reports and files. In effect, Knight has created a vast intelligence-gathering network. He gets to spy on Knight Errant's customers while they pay him for the privilege. In a nutshell, KE is Knight's shadow-ops, praetorian guard and secret police rolled into one.

◗ I agree with Squire's basic analysis of Knight Errant, but I would like to add a couple of things.

First off, Knight Errant isn't exactly as big a conspiracy as Squire makes it out to be. Most of KE's clients aren't stupid. They know that anything KE finds out about them gets whispered in Knight's ear. Most of the time they either don't care or they take precautions to make sure that KE operatives aren't exposed to the most sensitive data. If a megacorp is going to hire KE to supplement their own security forces, you can be sure that corp is going to put its own people near the important stuff and let KE handle the grunt work. Same is true for governments and other big noises.

Second, the average Knight Errant employee is not part of some big conspiracy. Most KE officers don't have secret agendas or anything like that. Like most other corp employees, they're just people trying to do their jobs.

Finally, Knight has to balance using Knight Errant for personal gain against the needs of running a business. KE makes a lot of moves based on nothing more than the bottom line, and it seems to me that Soaring-Owl serves to remind Knight of that more than anything else. Sometimes Knight might want to send KE off on some dead end that might benefit *his* plans but that would hurt the company in the long run. That's when Soaring-Owl has to hit the brakes and tell his boss "no." Anyone who thinks that old Soaring-Owl has no spine should catch one of his famous arguments with Knight over the direction of Knight Errant. He wins more than a few of them, too
◗ Errant Knight

ARTHUR VOGEL

Former presidential candidate, eco-laywer, director of Sierra Inc., new member of the Ares Macrotechnology board of directors—Arthur Vogel is a busy man these days.

Vogel may not have scored big enough at the polls to make him president of the UCAS, but he came up a winner when Dunkelzahn's will gave him a seat on the Ares board, along with the directorship of Sierra Inc. Since that time, Vogel has become a real thorn in the sides of both Knight and Aurelius, one that they might just try to remove sometime soon.

As anyone who watched the trid at all during the election knows, Vogel's got an ax to grind over the environment. He spent years working as a lawyer in the field of ecological law, prosecuting cases against major corporations accused of causing ecological damage (Ares included), and handling class-action suits for plaintiffs harmed through corporate negligence. He earned a reputation as a terror in the courtroom and the boardroom, where he extracted lucrative settlements from corporate defendants that did not want their dirty laundry aired in public.

Though Vogel seems to have given up his bid for public office right now (no word yet on whether he plans to run again in '60), he has not given up on his ecological ideals. Some of his more radical supporters think the dwarf sold out by joining up with a more "mainstream" organization like Sierra, not to mention sitting on the board of one of the megacorporations he used to fight against, but Vogel tells people he's simply taking his battle to the boardroom instead of the courtroom.

According to Vogel, his new strategy is to reform megacorporations from the inside out, starting with Ares. To this end, he attends corporate board meetings and carefully scrutinizes all Ares operations, looking for opportunities for the company to make itself more eco-friendly. Then he pitches his ideas to the board with the same lawyer-speak that let him settle so many tough cases. He hasn't got the voting power to push through any

changes without the support of most of the board, particularly Knight and/or Aurelius, but he has been able to get a few minor things going so far.

Word has it that Aurelius is courting Vogel's support for a future coup attempt by promising Vogel that he will push through some of Vogel's pet projects when he becomes chairman. Vogel has been carefully noncommittal so far, but my money is on him going along with some kind of alliance with Aurelius sooner or later, if only because Vogel can't resist working with an underdog.

◗ Artie still maintains contact with some of the more radical eco-activist groups out there, so I wouldn't be at all surprised if he starts trying to "green-mail" Ares and its subsidiaries at some point. You know, by passing info to his eco-freak pals about an objectionable Ares operation, then using the resulting "threat" against the operation to convince the Ares board that the operation's profits no longer justify its increased security costs and potential for damaging PR.
◗ Tanner

◗ If he does try his old scam, Vogel is going to have to be pretty fraggin' careful. Messing with Knight is not the sure way to a long and prosperous life.
◗ Nuyen Nick

◗ Only if you get caught, chummer. Only if you get caught
◗ Archangel

OPPORTUNITIES

Okay, now you've got the background, you know where to go and you know who some of the big players are. Now here's a run-down of biz opportunities in the Detroit shadows. I'm not going to be giving out Mr. Johnson's LTG number here—you've still got to get out on the streets and track down the action for yourself. I'm just going to give you some places to start looking and a little friendly advice on how to watch your back while you do it. I don't claim to know everything about what's going on, but hopefully some other skags will help to fill in the blanks—you hear that, all you skags out there? I'm not asking anyone to put all their cards on the table, but if you've got some general intel that you don't mind sharing, post it.

INTER-ARES CONFLICT

Ares is the biggest source of biz in Detroit. But which part of Ares—that's the question. Ares Macrotechnology may try to present a unified front to the rest of the world, but anyone who's read this file knows better. Ares is anything but one happy family, unless the family you're thinking of is the Borgias. Now more than ever, the corp is rife with internal politics and power struggles. It's not Fuchi, yet—but then, what is?

The faction on top right now is Damien Knight and anyone allied with him. Knight has close to total control over Ares at the moment, thanks to the backing of the Gavilan Ventures stock. Trouble is, that backing is temporary. Whatever deal Knight cut with Nadja Daviar, you can bet those proxies from Gavilan will revert to her sooner or later— probably within eighteen months to three years from now. That may seem like a long time, but when it happens Knight had better have a tight grip on Ares or the corp's going to slip through his fingers again.

So Knight is currently most interested in anything he can use to strengthen his own position or weaken the positions of Aurelius and his cronies. Doing that may not involve tackling Aurelius directly. To get a lever he can use against Aurelius, Knight needs as much intelligence about his rival's operations as possible—which puts data on closed-door goings-on in Detroit at a premium. But remember, those secrets are protected by some of the best private security that money can buy.

Knight would certainly be interested in more leverage against Daviar, too—anything he might use to hold on to the Gavilan stock or maybe even gain permanent control over it. Getting such leverage won't be easy, considering that Daviar is probably the most powerful woman in the UCAS—but Knight would certainly pay handsomely for it.

Aurelius is the underdog in the inter-Ares conflict, but he still has his supporters—not to mention control of 22 percent of the corp. Right now Aurelius is gathering his forces and considering his next move, so he needs information more than anything: solid data on everything there is to know about Knight and his operations, especially any weaknesses that Aurelius might exploit. Leonard needs to know how he can wrest control of the board away from Knight—and if it'll also let him kick Knight out on his hoop for good, so much the better.

Don't bother with the kind of intel Aurelius can get by reading the corporation's annual report. Leonard needs real dirt, the kind of black information that Knight keeps close to his chest. He also needs to make sure Knight doesn't know what he's found out, so inquiries need to be discreet or else the information could end up being worthless.

◗ One thing I've heard may interest both Knight and Aurelius. Dunkelzahn left Knight an antique chess set, minus the black king. You can guess who got that—that's right, Aurelius. Now both of them are trying to figure out why the dragon left them those items. Did the old wyrm simply like the symbolism of it? Or is there something more to it? From what I've heard, Aurelius has had his little chess piece subjected to every scientific and magical test known to man. Word has it that Knight would very much like to acquire the remaining piece, and Aurelius would like to lay his hands on the rest of the set. Achieving either goal might be nothing more than a symbolic victory for either man—or it could hold the key to something bigger. Either way, you can bet both sides will be hiring soon
◗ Castle

Arthur Vogel is a wild card in the conflict. Technically, Vogel is part of Ares, but he's still working outside the corp in many ways. He has his own agenda and is bound to want help to push it. He's also undoubtedly considering allying himself with Aurelius, and so will certainly want to check out his prospective "partner"—and maybe get a little something to hold over Aurelius's head to ensure that things go his way.

Neither Aurelius nor Knight trust Vogel, and they're both concealing plenty from him. And you can bet Vogel wants to bust open everyone's closets and drag out the skeletons—so anyone who can do that for him will no doubt be properly rewarded. Same goes for digging up information Vogel can use to make Ares or another megacorp clean up its act.

Of course, Vogel's probably playing it safe for the moment. He's new to the board, and he's only attended one board meeting so far. He's gotten where he is because he's one cunning little dwarf—so he'll take his time, feel out the situation and not tip his hand by coming in with both barrels blazing.

◗ Come on. Vogel's only been in the Ares mix since, what, late August? Or maybe not even until September. He has one lousy seat, so except for his name he wouldn't matter squat. When Dunkelzahn held that seat, the corp went on its merry way making nuyen and fraggin' shadowrunners. So now Vogel gets the seat and all of sudden he's a player making corporate decisions? I doubt it

◗ CCCampbell

"Home is where I keep my Predator"

◗ I've heard about some runs involving ecological mishaps on the part of some of Ares s competitors. Maybe Vogel is trying to get the dirt on one of them pulling a serious environmental infraction Then he puts the squeeze on them, they pull out or shut down operations, and Ares gets to move in and take over—in a more eco-friendly manner, no doubt. Vogel gets what he wants and helps out Ares at the same time, which increases his value to the company. A win-win situation, if it actually works

◗ Soylent Green

TORONTO-QUÉBEC FRONT

Through Ares, Damien Knight seems to be covertly sponsoring groups such as the True Canadians by arranging for "stolen" Ares equipment to find its way to them and occasionally arranging for some additional "specialists" for certain tasks in which Ares has an interest. I don't know what ultimate purpose Knight has in supporting these political factions, but they do seem to direct their actions against the Powers That Be in Toronto and Québec. Word has some of the more radical splinter groups have been using runners to hijack and transport supplies, gather intelligence in and around Toronto and Québec City, and perform other assorted jobs.

◗ As I said, Knight's primary interest is probably disrupting Cross Corp's operations in Québec with these rabble-rousers. Not sure what other reason he could have for wanting to stir up trouble in Toronto and Québec

◗ Errant Knight

◗ Bet lots of people would pay handsomely to find out, though

◗ DeeTee

ANTI-ARES FACTIONS

Like any megacorp, Ares has plenty of enemies, and many them have been funding runs against Ares lately. Ares's megacorporate rivals—Saeder-Krupp, Mitsuhama and Fuchi, to name just a few—would undoubtedly be interested in all the information mentioned in the previous sections. Of course, making a run against Ares in its home town isn't easy, but rival corps tend to raise their payments to reflect that.

• Aztechnology is also paying well for Ares-related information these days. Though the two corps don't usually locate their facilities close together, many of their markets overlap. Especially since the election, Aztechnology has taken a real interest in intel on Ares.
• Pyramid Watcher

• Yeah, like I'm going to work for Aztech against Ares. I don't think so
• Ringer

• Their money is as good as anyone else's, chummer. Don't get all sentimental about fragging megacorps. I doubt Ares will appreciate your "loyalty" when you break into a place protected by Knight Errant and they mow you down.
• Prime Runner

Ares has plenty of non-corporate enemies, too. The Mafia and some of the other syndicates occasionally pay for runs against Knight and his boys. And there never seems to be any shortage of radical groups such as eco-terrorists and neo-anarchists looking to hit Ares where it hurts: in its bottom line. If you ask me, steer clear of these people, because getting involved with a group that has a cause is usually a dangerous proposition. Most of the time they're looking for people to become martyrs—which is not a prescription for a long life.

• The bugs are sponsoring runs against Ares, too. That's right. Some faction or factions of insect spirits are looking to pay Ares back for all the bughunting in Chicago. Word has it that at least one covert bug group is operating among the refugees in the Blight. So be careful if some new Johnson hires you for a run against Ares. He might not be all that he appears.
• Kurtz

• Most hijacking operations directed against Ares don't take place in Detroit, but someone might be bold enough (or dumb enough) to try something like that right under the corp's nose, especially as part of a larger game plan.
• Pong@boing.boing.boing.net

THE BIG TWO

Ares isn't the only game in Detroit, just the biggest one. The "Big Two" automakers, Ford and GM, are always hiring shadowrunners and deckers to find that key bit of intel that will give them an edge and land them those lucrative contracts from Ares, the UCAS, the CAS, Mitsuhama and some of the other megacorps that need vehicle and drone parts and designs.

Of course, the Big Two are always having it out against Japanacorps such as Chrysler-Nissan over new designs, prototypes, contracts, executives, R&D people and just about everything else there is to fight over. Working for a Chrysler-Nissan Johnson offers some lucrative possibilities, but can also put you in a very unpopular position if you're not careful—not that this is news to most of you out there.

BUGHUNTING

I've heard Ares is still looking to take care of the remaining insect spirits in Chicago, and that Knight Errant is also looking for signs of other major hives in North America and the rest of the world that it can clean up (for a fee, of course). Though most of the North American operations are nominally under the direction of the UCAS government, Ares seems to be the driving force behind them. That's not surprising, considering that its Firewatch teams were clearing out bug nests before the UCAS government knew the threat existed.

These activities present potential opportunities for shadowrunners who are looking to pass information on the bugs to Ares, or who are willing to sign on as bughunters to help KE clear out nests and hives. Personally, I think there are easier and cleaner ways to make your money—like brush wars in Aztlan and Amazonia, or playing Urban Brawl.

• I suspect most bughunting gigs are going to be discreetly assigned freelance assignments rather than jobs for Ares directly. Ares stays pretty close-mouthed about its bughunting operations, except for the occasional PR sim or vid of brave Ares and Knight Errant agents clearing out an infestation
• Ork N. Mann

• I agree with Squire. If you want to go bughunting, fine, but there are easier and better ways to make nuyen in the shadows that don't involve going up against giant wasps that can rip your head off.
• Knocker

• Yeah, but some of us see killing bugs as doing everyone a favor. The money's just a bonus.
• Raid

ARES SECRETS

Because Ares is so factionalized these days, the corp's right hand often doesn't know what its left hand is doing—and vice versa. And that makes for plenty of secrets—which not only have to be kept from outsiders, but also from rival execs within the megacorp. As with any other corporate secrets, plenty of folks are ready to pay big nuyen to get them. And it goes without saying that Ares, like any other megacorp, is more than willing to kill to protect them.

You've already read plenty of speculation about Knight's real background, what really happened to Nicholas Aurelius, what the deal was between Knight and Daviar over Gavilan Ventures and other deep dark drek that Ares would prefer to keep hidden. Some of the speculation may be right on the money, some of it may be way off—and that's the kind of thing certain folks would

really like to know. Plus, there's all the Ares operations that no one even knows enough about to speculate on.

◗ Here's one for you. While I was on an unrelated run through the Ares system, I snagged some cargo-manifest files for Daedalus-bound shuttle flights. Those lists contained some strange entries, drek you wouldn't think would be going up the well to an orbital. So I did a little checking. A mage chummer of mine told me that some of the stuff could have been ritual magic supplies, which makes no sense at all. Magic doesn't work in space; everyone knows that. Mages who tried it have all ended up dead or insane. So why would Ares be shipping magical drek up to its orbital platform?
◗ Silver Skater

◗ Here's another one. How did Ares end up fighting the insect spirits? Yeah, we know the corp was involved in Chicago and that it had teams of bughunters cacking the critters for years, but how did it find out about them in the first place? The rumor mills say Dunkelzahn told them, but what if he didn't? And if he did, what else did the dragon tell Knight that he didn't tell anyone else?
◗ Regent

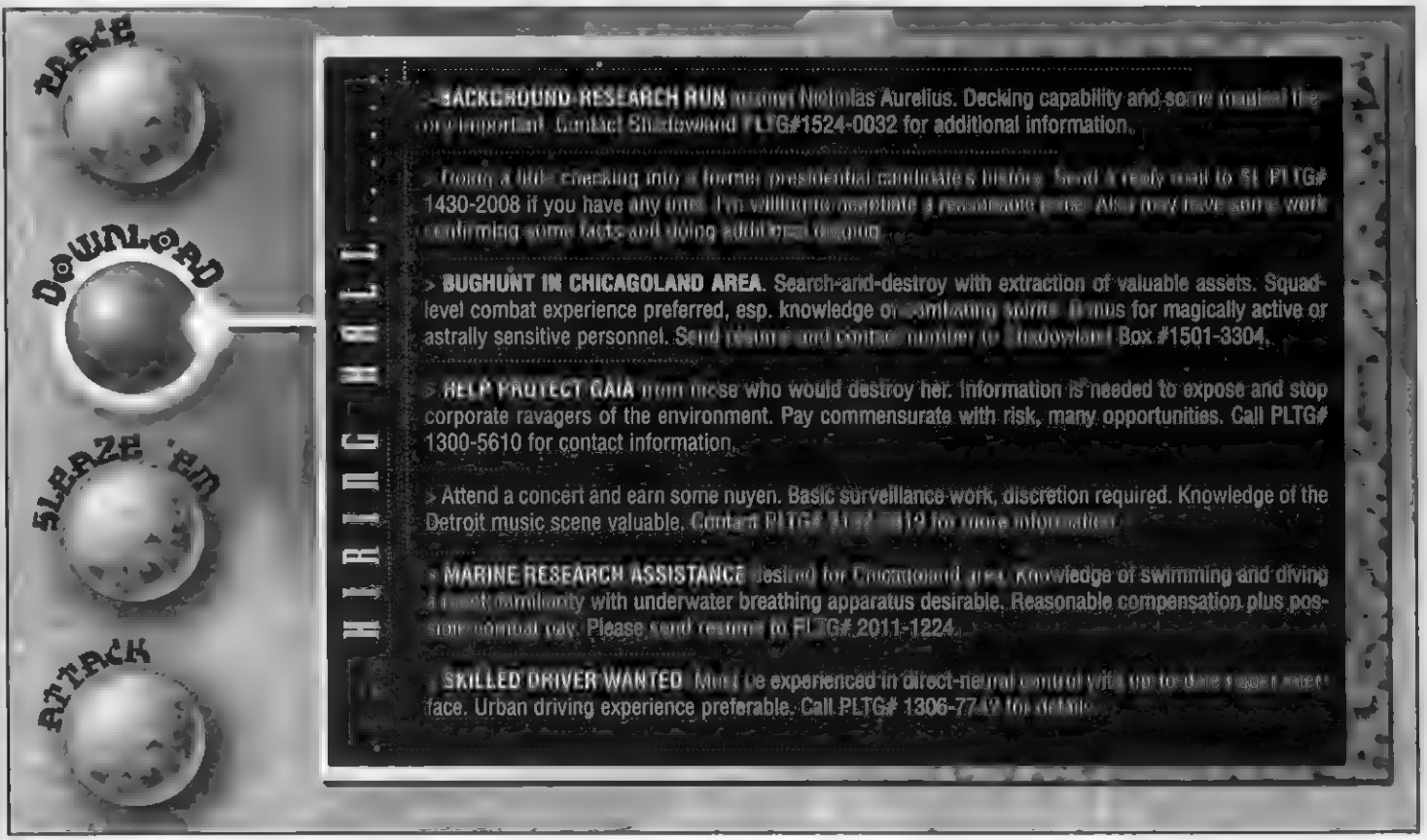
◗ Some of the stuff in Dunkelzahn's will implies that the Big D—if not all great dragons—could see the future. If that's true, maybe the dragon had more to do with Knight's Nanosecond Buyout than people think. If you could program a sophisticated bank of computers with certain knowledge of the future and use that on the stock market, you probably could pull off what Knight did—and a few other things, too. Are some of Knight's odd business plans part of some grander design that includes a knowledge of things to come?
◗ Dr. Destiny

◗ Ares has more mundane secrets, too. The corp's Chicago operation is undoubtedly yielding scads of data for Ares's cutting-edge R&D groups. Who knows what kind of unexpected applications the boys and girls in the white lab coats will find for this data? And who knows what Ares's competitors and enemies could do with it? All of it is worth something to the right party—you just have to know what's valuable to whom and how to get to it.
◗ Prime Runner

HIRING HALL

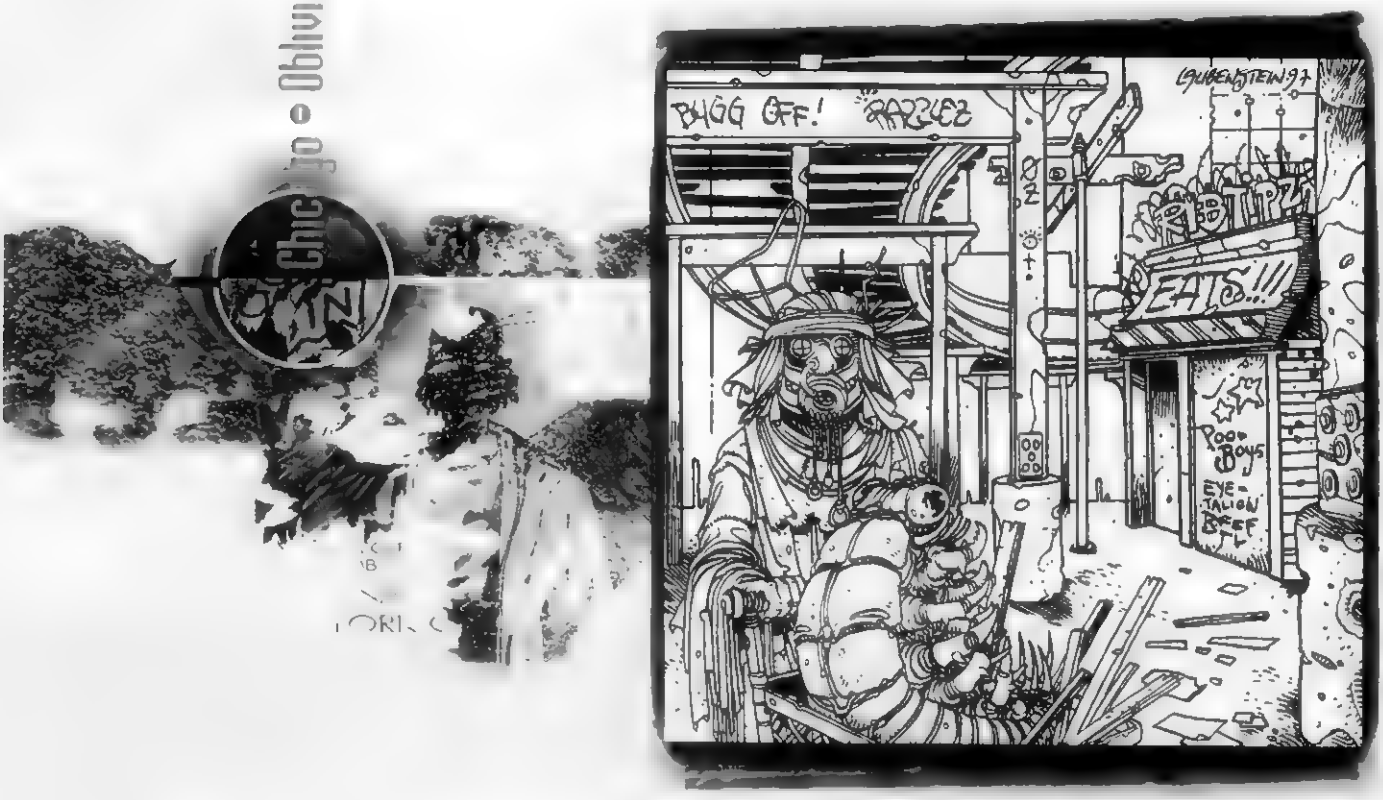
◗ Normally, we try to keep the "business" and "informational" sides of our little BBS separate, so as not to clutter the files with posts from runners looking for work and Johnsons looking for runners. But given the unique nature of these files, I've made an exception to the usual rule and included a few links to some related Hiring Hall postings, so you skags can browse through some of the other opportunities being offered right now. We at Shadowland aim to please. Feel free to check the Hiring Hall board for more complete listings.

You're welcome. Please, no applause, just throw money.
◗ Captain Chaos
Transmitted: 21 March 2058 at 02:47:14 (EST)


HACK
DOWNLOAD
SLAZE 'EM
ATTACK
HIRING HALL...
> BACKGROUND RESEARCH RUN
> BUGHUNT IN CHICAGOLAND AREA. Search-and-destroy with extraction of valuable assets. Squad-level combat experience preferred, esp. knowledge of
> HELP PROTECT GAIA
> Attend a concert and earn some nuyen. Basic surveillance work, discretion required. Knowledge of the Detroit music scene valuable. Contact
> MARINE RESEARCH ASSISTANCE
> SKILLED DRIVER WANTED

CHICAGO • OBLIVION'S END?

Chicago • Oblivion's End?



Ever since President Haeffner formally dropped the blockade of Chicago (see the **State of the Union** post if you missed it), we've been getting swamped by data coming out of the old CZ. Until recently, Matrix contact between Chicago and the outside world was limited to occasional satellite uplinks when you could break through the jamming. But now the lines of communication are much more open, even though many of the land lines into Chicago haven't been rebuilt since the Army cut them. After sifting through the thousands of Chicago-related BBS postings scattered all over Shadowland since I put up Haeffner's announcement and related text, I've managed to compile this document. Hopefully it will give you an overall picture of just what the frag happened in Chicago and what things are like in there now that the bugs are "gone" (and if you believe that claim, I have a "simple run" for you to go on. You know the kind ... no complications ... !).

It's been just over a month since the CZ was abolished, and we're still getting mixed reports of what's going on. Ares is saying one thing, the folks still in Chicago are saying another, the government isn't saying much at all ... it's enough to make your head spin. I've tried to keep this file restricted to tidbits of information that were somewhat verifiable, but there's no way to tell for certain how much of the following drek is chip-truth, paranoia or outright wishful thinking. So have fun scanning, but don't forget to bring a few grains of salt with you. You're gonna need them.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 1 April 2058 at 10:03:58 (EST)

LM 97

OUTBREAK

● Friend of a friend of a ... well, you get the idea ... happened across this file in BacteriTech's system during a datasteal. It was flagged with a top-secret rating that my chummer had never fragging seen before, so he figured it had to be something important. But when he finally got around to scanning it, the file turned out to be somebody's journal entry. Didn't seem to be worth all the fuss, so he started asking around, which is how I got hold of it. The poor slot didn't make it back from his next run, so here I am left with this ultra-top-secret diary entry, trying to figure out why it's so important. Any ideas?
● Widow

4 February 2058
22:43:12

It had to happen on my shift, didn't it? The worst security lapse in the history of the department, and I was the one plugged in watching it all. Watching nothing, more like. Everything looked normal. No alarms sounded, no one saw anything unusual. Then the entire paranatural population of Sigma Ward keeled over dead in the span of an hour. And I was the lucky slot who got to face the special investigator from the paranormal research division and explain just how the frag I'd "allowed" that to happen.

The woman they sent to "chat" with me was a mage. Even if I hadn't known ahead of time, I would've figured it out shortly after our meeting began. She had a way of looking through people rather than at them. I figured it meant she was looking astrally at me. It was disconcerting to think I couldn't bluff my way through the interview, or lie. Not that I had reason to lie. I'd done my job and had nothing to hide. But it was my hoop on the line; if the company decided they needed someone to blame for the disaster, I was the obvious choice.

In a quiet but eerily intent voice, the mage asked me if I was sure I hadn't seen anyone enter the room. I repeated my earlier answer: "No ... no one at all." Watching this woman, I became convinced that she could out-stare a statue. When she'd first walked into the room, I hadn't noticed anything significant about her. During the interview, though, it was my turn to feel insignificant. I finally gave up the staring contest and rubbed my eyes tiredly, happy to have an excuse to avert my gaze. My momentary reprieve was broken by the sound of a stylus moving across a datapad as the mage made some notes. It suddenly occurred to me that people who looked nervous looked guilty. I must have looked guilty as sin.

My interrogator let me sweat for a little longer before continuing the interview. She asked if I had checked the security logs after the "incident." Briefly forgetting my nervousness, I retorted that *of course* I had checked the fragging logs. Despite the initial appearances of this whole situation, I really do know how to do my job. She ignored my outburst, not breaking that cool facade one bit, and calmly suggested that we review the tapes again. Well ... not "suggested," exactly. The grammar of the sentence marked it as a question, but her tone left no room for argument. So I jacked into the security console and immediately felt just a little more at ease. I was in my element. "Care to jack in or should I put it up on the monitor?" I asked, half-jokingly. Then I noticed the datajack gleaming behind her right ear, barely visible beneath her short-cut dark hair, and quit chuckling. So much for magician stereotypes.

She didn't miss a beat. "The monitor, please."

I'd never met anyone so polite and so cold at the same time. She stood up in one smooth motion and walked over to stand behind and slightly to one side of me. The lengthy authorization procedure took even longer than usual; I felt constantly distracted by an almost paranoid need to look over my shoulder at the mage. Finally, the computer decided that I was who I claimed to be, and allowed me access to the security mainframe. I called up the security log files and loaded the camera data from Sigma Ward for the past twelve hours. At the investigator's prompting, I ran the tape starting three hours before I had noticed anything was wrong.

I wasn't really paying much attention as the images scrolled by. I knew we weren't going to find anything useful. I'd been over those tapes a million times looking for something—anything—I'd missed, but with no luck. There wasn't the slightest sign of trouble. So I was noticeably surprised when, after about ten minutes of scanning through the tape at high speed, the woman sharply ordered me to pause and play back. I rewound a few frames until she was satisfied and then studied the screen more carefully. It was a still shot of the paranatural wing, dimly lit at that late hour, the animal specimens sedate in their cages. The scene looked peaceful; nothing seemed at all amiss. If anything, it was too quiet, so I asked her what was up.

She ignored me, of course, and continued staring at the screen. Baffled, and more than a little annoyed, I kept watching and waited to see if she would care to clue me in. The woman studied the scene for another moment, then pointed toward one of the cages. "There. The black annis."

Still baffled, I squinted at the monitor and saw the animal in question. "It's asleep," I replied, and gave her a look that said please-tell-me-what's-so-fragging-odd-about-a-snoozing-paranormal-ape.

She turned away from the monitor and glared at me. "Exactly," she said in a condescending tone. "It's asleep."

I was no closer to understanding, so I tried a different approach. I pointed out that it was, in fact, the middle of the night. So why shouldn't the black annis be asleep? She looked at me the way a schoolteacher with a short fuse looks at a dense student, as if she wanted to throttle me for not knowing the right answer. I flinched, instinctively bracing for a slap on the back of the head. But she just shook her head. "The black annis is a nocturnal creature. You've worked here for how long, and you don't know that?"

I'm a security rigger, not a fragging paranatural zoologist! How am I supposed to know that sort of drek? I made the mistake of saying that out loud and immediately regretted it. Thankfully, she let the comment slide with nothing more than another harsh glare, and demanded a reading on the animal's temperature. I switched the input to the thermographic data that the camera had recorded. The measurement flickered up on the screen. The mage nodded and commented that it was at least ten degrees above normal. I couldn't help but wonder who in the world would know the normal body temperature of a black annis off the top of her head. Little did I know that I hadn't seen anything yet.

At her instruction, I displayed thermo readings on all the other critters. She nodded at each animal's temperature, but didn't say a fragging word except to announce that they were all higher than normal. "What are you, some kind of walking encyclopedia of Awakened creatures?" I mumbled. "How the frag do you know all that?"

From the way she looked at me then, I half-expected a fireball spell to toast me right there in my seat. But instead of frying me, she turned her attention back to the screen. Then, without further explanation, she suddenly got up and walked out the door. I watched her go, feeling hopelessly confused, and then decided to take a gander at what she was up to. I switched to full-cyber interface and followed her using the closed-circuit security system. It didn't take long to figure out her destination: Sigma Ward. While she was swiping her magkey through the card reader, I took a look at the scene on the other side of the door.

The animals had all been removed, shipped off to some zoological autopsy room somewhere for "further study," but other than that the lab looked the same as it had on the security camera the previous night. The door slid open and the woman walked inside. She looked around for a moment; then her eyes seemed to unfocus in that same distant stare she'd fixed on me earlier in the interview. The really odd thing, though, was what happened next. The mage flung up her hands in front of her face as if to shield herself and took a step backwards. Her surprise only lasted a few moments; then she lowered her arms and made dusting-herself-off motions. She looked disgusted, the way people look after they've stepped in dog drek, and I wondered what was going on.

After frowning around at the room for a little while longer, the woman drew a cell phone from the pocket of her suit coat. She punched one of the autodial buttons and waited. My curiosity got the better of me, so I listened in as she spoke to whoever was on the other end of the line. I still remember what she said: "Tashkey, it's me. I think I figured out the cause of our little problem here. Get one of our cleanup teams down to Sigma section. And check the containment seals on the beta canisters. If that was the cause, we may be able to bump up the schedule a bit." She looked around, almost like there was something in the room with her. "I think we may have the results of a preliminary field test here. All right. Bye." She closed the phone, slipped it back into her pocket and walked out of the room.

Five hours later, I was looking for another job. Fragging wonderful start to a new year.

- Nice story, but I still don't see why it would be so hush-hush Another corp research project gone awry? Woohoo, stop the presses. This sort of drek goes on all the time
- Naysayer

"Stop the world, I wanna get off!"

- The threads are subtle, but I think I see why the Captain included this post. There's the timing of it, and the "beta canisters" remark the rigger heard could've been referring to Strain-III-Beta. There's your connection, 'Sayer. Looks like Widow's rigger buddy had a ringside seat for the prelims of that little operation
- Phantom

- Bit of a stretch there, I think. Beta could've meant anything, not necessarily Strain-III
- Weasel Boy

- Yeah, but what are the odds of both being in the same post, which just happens to involve BacteriTech and a bunch of paranormal critters keeling over for no apparent reason? Seems clear to me
- Ivo

- Hey, wait a tic. If I remember the posts on Strain-III awhile back, it took that stuff a fragging long time to kill something as small as a devil rat But in this post the stuff's wiping out a whole boatload of critters in the space of a few hours. Something doesn't add up
- Slow Bob

◗ Demonstrating the aptness of your handle again, Bob? The critical factor you're missing is the term "beta." As in, new and improved version. Generally, one does not want a weapon to take days to kill an opponent. The original Strain-III had limited practical application. Naturally, the corporations took steps to improve its effectiveness.
◗ Professor J
jjacobs@mitm.edu

◗ Oh, this is just peachy. Invasion of the mutant magical bacteria from beyond the grave
◗ Tservo

◗ Oh, don't be so melodramatic. Bacteria research has been going on since before either of us was born. With the success of the Fat Bac project, it was only natural for R&D into related technologies to continue.
◗ Professor J
jjacobs@mitm.edu

◗ Yeah, well, all these new germs make me nervous. Fat Bac, Strain-III, Strain-III beta ... what the frag is next?
◗ Tservo

◗ I don't think I want to know.
◗ Naysayer
"Stop the world, I wanna get off!"

◗ Strain-III Delta??
◗ Slow Bob

◗ Thanks, Bob. *sigh*
◗ Tservo

ON TARGET

◗ Here's a transcript of a trid show broadcast shortly after President Haeffner's news conference. Holly, from the local NBS affiliate in Chicago (actually, outside Chicago—I think they broadcast from Schaumburg), was lucky enough to snag exclusive interview rights, but the recording was replayed across the nation. If you want the full-vid version, check the entertainment archives
◗ Captain Chaos
Transmitted: 1 April 2058 at 06:15:03 (EST)

HOLLY: Welcome to tonight's edition of On Target. I'm your host, Holly Kazinsky. Tonight, we—along with much of the nation—turn our attention toward Chicago. Just minutes ago, President Haeffner formally declared the Chicago Containment Zone abolished. In the next half hour, we will speak with some of the people instrumental in bringing about this momentous event, and examine some of the long-range effects in store for Chicago. Did the president act prematurely in making his declaration? Were the actions of Ares Macrotechology in our best interests, and in the best interests of those unfortunate souls who have been trapped in the Containment Zone for nearly two and a half years? These questions and more tonight as we bring you On Target: Oblivion's End.

Joining us this evening are Commander Andrew Kirkpatrick from Knight Errant Security, with a behind-the-scenes look at the operation that brought an end to the Containment Zone nightmare. Also with us is Savannah Simmons, here on behalf of the Empowerment Coalition, as we examine the implications of Chicago's liberation for the growing metahuman rights movement. Thank you both for joining us.
KIRKPATRICK: It's a pleasure, Holly.
SIMMONS: *nods*.
HOLLY: Commander, this announcement by President Haeffner certainly has come as a surprise to most everyone. The Containment Zone has existed for more than two years, and now, seemingly out of the blue, the government abolishes it? Can you give us some insight into the events that led up to this ... transformation?
KIRKPATRICK: Well ... *clears throat* I'm sure you're well aware of the events that led up to the establishment of the Containment Zone just over two years ago. No one wanted to seal off the city, but as they say, desperate times call for desperate measures. As soon as we had ensured the safety of the surrounding areas, we went ahead with the operation we'd planned to bring about the end of the Containment Zone.
SIMMONS: It is easy to point to the freed inhabitants of the Containment Zone and say that the actions of Ares and the government were in their best interests. But the end doesn't always justify the means, Commander Kirkpatrick.
KIRKPATRICK: I agree with you in principle, Miss Simmons, but I don't believe that observation applies in this situation. We gave Operation Extermination the go-ahead only after careful consideration of the potential dangers. The end result was the reclamation of Chicago from the insect spirits.
HOLLY: You mention Operation Extermination, Commander. What can you tell us about it? Who was involved in it?
KIRKPATRICK: Operation Extermination was a joint venture involving members of the UCAS Armed Forces along with specially-trained strike teams from Knight Errant Security. Armed with special technological and magical support designed to eradicate the insect spirits, the troops were dispatched to systematically clear the Containment Zone of infestation.

◗ Bulldrek!! I know for a fact KE was on its own. They went ahead without the go-ahead from the government, and afterwards Haeffner decided it was better to take some of the credit than to point out how the UCAS military did drek to end this situation.
◗ G-Man

◗ Well, as long as they got the bugs out, who gives a frag whether they got the government to back them or not?
◗ Machiavelli

◗ Probably exactly what Haeffner was thinking when he gave his stamp of approval after the fact.
◗ Redfoot

HOLLY: How sure can you be, Commander, that the area is safe now? Isn't the government taking the risk of acting too swiftly in this matter?
SIMMONS: Yes, what makes you think your methods actually ensured that the plague of insect spirits in Chicago will not spread to the rest of the country?
KIRKPATRICK: Well, all of our projections indicated 95 percent effectiveness after the release of the Strain-III beta. And we knew the remaining insects would be taken care of by the strike teams we sent into the Zone. Preliminary reports from Chicago confirm our estimates. Based on the success of the mission, Ares made a formal report to the president and informed him that there was no longer a significant threat to citizens outside the Zone. Mr. Knight recommended ending the quarantine because the situation no longer warranted it.

HOLLY: *nodding* You mention the release of "Strain-III Beta." This has been dubbed by some as Ares's "secret weapon" against the insect spirits. Can you tell us more about it?
KIRKPATRICK: Strain-III Beta is a continuation of the Fat Bacteria project, a joint venture between Ares and BacteriTech. Strain III is an astral entity that attaches itself to the insect spirits and drains away their magical energy. It allowed us to assault the weakened insects by more conventional means.
SIMMONS: You're oversimplifying a bit, aren't you, commander? This virus will not only attach itself to the insect spirits, but will drain any and all astrally active beings or objects. It's hardly exclusive in choosing its victims. Look what happened to the ghoul population in the Cabrini Refuge.
KIRKPATRICK: In any war there are unfortunate casualties. We can hardly begin to count the number of UCAS citizens who died inside the Containment Zone at the hands of the insect spirits, yet you make these ghouls out to be martyrs! Would you prefer, Miss Simmons, that we had left the Containment Zone intact and sacrificed the lives of the thousands of people trapped inside?
SIMMONS: Ares was quick enough to sacrifice the ghouls.

• "Recommended," my hoop! Damien Knight dropped Chi-town like a hot potato and left the government to clean up the mess. Haeffner had no choice but to abolish the Zone, since without Ares's help he didn't have a snowball's chance of maintaining the CZ blockade
• G-Man

• Hey, G-Man, money talks. When D. K. says the place is clean, the UCAS shouts, "Yes, sir! Really clean, sir!" Face facts, chummer, the CZ could be as full of bugs as the day the nuke was set off. But who's going to say the Emperor's wrong?
• Spike
"My name is my passport "

• Wait a tic. What happened to the ghouls?
• Tservo

• Like the lady said, this Strain-III Beta isn't too choosy about its meals. Ghouls are dual-natured, and were just as tasty to the astral bacteria as the insect spirits. I hear the same happened with elementals and nature spirits in the area. On the up side, Ares sure cured Chicago of its devil rat problem. :)
• Phantom

• Very funny. I'm sure the families of those dead ghouls are rolling in the aisles
• Luther

• Families ... hah! Tell me this: when did a ghoul ever think twice about the family of the poor slot who wound up as his afternoon snack? I can't believe this drek
• Doc

● The UCAS government has been trying to get rid of the ghouls in the Cabrini Refuge for years, and they finally found a way to do it without being obvious
● Lone Gunman

● Just a side note—it didn't quite cure the devil rat problem. Those suckers are tough as cockroaches. Some of them managed to survive, like they always do. And some of the ghouls survived too. Don't let the Ghoul Liberation Front propaganda fool you. S3-B is a virus, like any other. It's not some weapon of mass destruction.
● Naysayer
"Stop the world, I wanna get off!"

● Tell that to the bugs. Seriously, though, the Empowerment Coalition and the metahuman rights activists are taking the ghoul thing and shoving it in the government's face. If the government was trying to sweep the ghouls under the carpet, they failed miserably.
● Khafka

● I hate to beat a dead CEO, but if Mr. Knight just happened to think that all living material in the CZ should be destroyed ... well, the prez and the gummint have no real say. Face facts, kiddies. Knight called the shots. Knight decides who lives and who dies
● Spike
"My name is my passport ... "

● Wow, Spike ... you know, they have counseling simchips for that.
● Granite
"Rock Steady"

HOLLY: It seems we're getting back to the "ends justify the means" argument. But you must admit, commander, that the effectiveness of the virus seems to have been somewhat underestimated.
KIRKPATRICK: No amount of testing in a lab environment can account for everything that might happen in the real world. Our estimates, based on the most complete R&D information available, showed that the bacteria would collect in areas of strong magical energy, such as the insect hives, minimizing the risk to bystanders.
HOLLY: Does this astral virus pose any threat to the inhabitants of Chicagoland?
KIRKPATRICK: *shakes his head* No. There is no risk at all to mundanes, and magicians can protect themselves with a few simple precautions. The virus is only attracted to things that are active astrally. Magicians can ensure their safety by not perceiving or projecting in the area for long periods of time. As soon as they cease being astrally active, the virus will move on to search for other sources of food.
SIMMONS: Good advice, unless you happen to be dual-natured. Ally and free spirits, paranatural wildlife in the surrounding areas, especially the paranatural zoo, the water and air elementals on Lake Michigan ... and, of course, the ghouls. What you're talking about here is a magical ecological nightmare!

● You can bet Arthur Vogel wasn't too terribly pleased at all this He's been trying to tug Ares more toward the pro-ecology side ever since the Big D left him a seat on the board
● Birdwatcher

● Obviously Ares isn't terribly interested in preserving the environment. I mean, come on, they detonated a fragging nuclear bomb downtown!
● Emissary

● They did what?! What have you been slotting, Emissary?
● Sheri
swilson2715@UCASOL.com

● You're obviously new around here, Sheri. Check out the archives for the old **Bug City** post. Emissary is speaking chip-truth here.
● Sage
"Knows all, but tells less"

● Hey, speaking of chip truth ... am I the only one who thinks this whole interview is a send-up job? I mean, come on, Ares owns NBS. They're hardly going to miss the chance to make themselves look good on national trid
● Skeptic

● Well, you'd be a fool to take anything at face value, but I know Holly and she's no corp yes-man (or woman, in this case.) Remember that exposé she did last year on the Biggs Investment Scandal? You can bet your wires that one didn't go over too well with Mr. Knight's boys, but she ran it anyway. So I tend to think this isn't entirely Ares propaganda we're listening to here.
● Iceman

KIRKPATRICK: Ares's first concern was for the lives of the people trapped in the Containment Zone. The side effects of the virus will be minimal at best, and limited to the confines of the Zone.

● Yeah, *right* ... and if you buy that line I've got some prime beachfront property in Iowa that might interest you. Knight could care less about the people *in* the CZ; it's the ones sitting up on the walls guarding the place that have him worried. All those Knight Errant slags stuck watching Chi-town when they could be out on a contract, earning their keep. All DK cares about is the bottom line; don't let this propaganda fool you.
● Skeptic

HOLLY: What guarantee do you have that the virus will not spread beyond Chicago?
KIRKPATRICK: Once the virus runs out of food it will go dormant. Shortly after that, it will die. Our research analysts took these facts into careful consideration before we set our plan in motion. Within the next few weeks, the city will be clear of the virus.
HOLLY: It's time for a commercial break. When we return, we will examine the metahuman rights movement, which has been gaining momentum in the months since the assassination of President Dunkelzahn, and Miss Simmons will give us an inside look at the Empowerment Coalition's role in the struggle for equality. So stay tuned for the second half of this special report, On Target: Oblivion's End.

THE CITY THAT WORKS!

I picked a few posts for this section to highlight some different points of view from inside Chicago. I left the original time-date stamps on the posts to show how certain things developed since Ares's operation. Read and learn, kiddies.

Captain Chaos
Transmitted: 1 April 2058 at 11:20:49 (EST)

OPERATION EXTERMINATION

This first bit is a transcript of a conversation on one of the local Chicago BBS systems that took place on 22 February 2058, the day Ares launched Operation Extermination. This log spans about eight hours, so I cut out a lot of the "What the frag is going on" spam because it got repetitive after awhile. If you want to torture yourself with the full unabridged version, check out the archives.

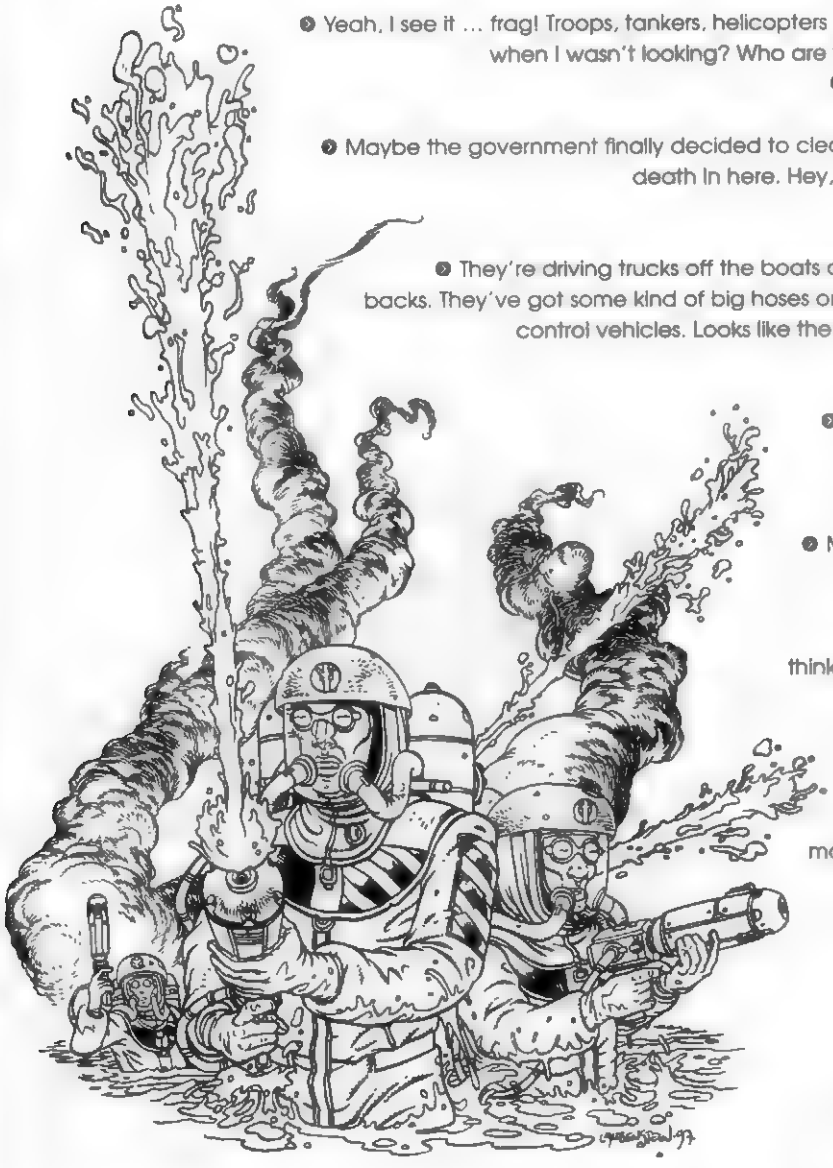
Captain Chaos
Transmitted: 1 April 2058 at 11:21:14 (EST)

Heyheyhey! Anybody here near the lake? You've gotta scan this! There's some kind of strike force landing at Oak Street Beach!
Domino

Yeah, I see it ... frag! Troops, tankers, helicopters ...what is this, a D-Day re-enactment? Did we go to war when I wasn't looking? Who are these guys? Corp? UCAS? Quebec???
Elroy

Maybe the government finally decided to clean us all out instead of letting us die a slow and painful death in here. Hey, Dom ... what are they doing now?
Max

They're driving trucks off the boats and onto the beach ... with fragging huge tankers on the backs. They've got some kind of big hoses on top of the tanks, like the kind you see on Citymaster riot-control vehicles. Looks like the trucks have Knight Errant logos on them.
Domino



Oh, just fragging great. Another Knight Errant bug raid. Didn't they learn their lesson two years ago?
Callahan

Maybe they're actually going to do the job right this time.
Tran

Holy drek, they're putting on radiation suits. You don't think they're gonna try to set off another nuke, do you?!
Domino

Calm down, Domino. Those aren't rad suits, they're chem suits. Though I'm not sure that's much of an improvement. Looks like they're getting ready to move out now ... they're gathering around the trucks. These guys are armed to the teeth!
Elroy

Where are they headed?
Xalor

They've broken up into groups now, heading off in different directions. From my bird's-eye view, it looks like spokes on a wheel, radiating outward into the city.
Domino

◗ One of my mage chummers just told me that astral space around here is like fragging O'Hare during a holiday weekend. There are more magicians, spirits (real ones, not the buggy kind) and elementals floating around than you can shake a stick at. I don't know what's going down, but this is *big*. Valere says she's never seen this many magicians in one place at the same time since graduation day at MIT&T.
◗ Max

◗ Hey, some of them are coming this way. I don't think I like the sound of the warnings they're giving over the loudspeakers. "Citizens of Chicago, for your own safety we urge you to remain in your homes." Are you *sure* they're not going to nuke us?
◗ Hammerfist

◗ If they are, you think staying in our homes is going to make a slotting bit of difference one way or the other?
◗ Bugzapper

◗ What the frag ... !?!? One of the strike teams just got into my neighborhood, and they're dousing an abandoned building on the corner with stuff from one of those tankers. The big hose on top is just soaking the place. What in the world do they think they're doing?? All the other troopers are spread out in the street, guns ready like they're waiting for something to come out of the building. What is this?!
◗ Bernie

◗ "Stuff"? Gee, Bernie, could you be a *little* more specific?
◗ Greylake

◗ They're doing something similar over here. Only they're shooting the water down a sewer drain.
◗ Max

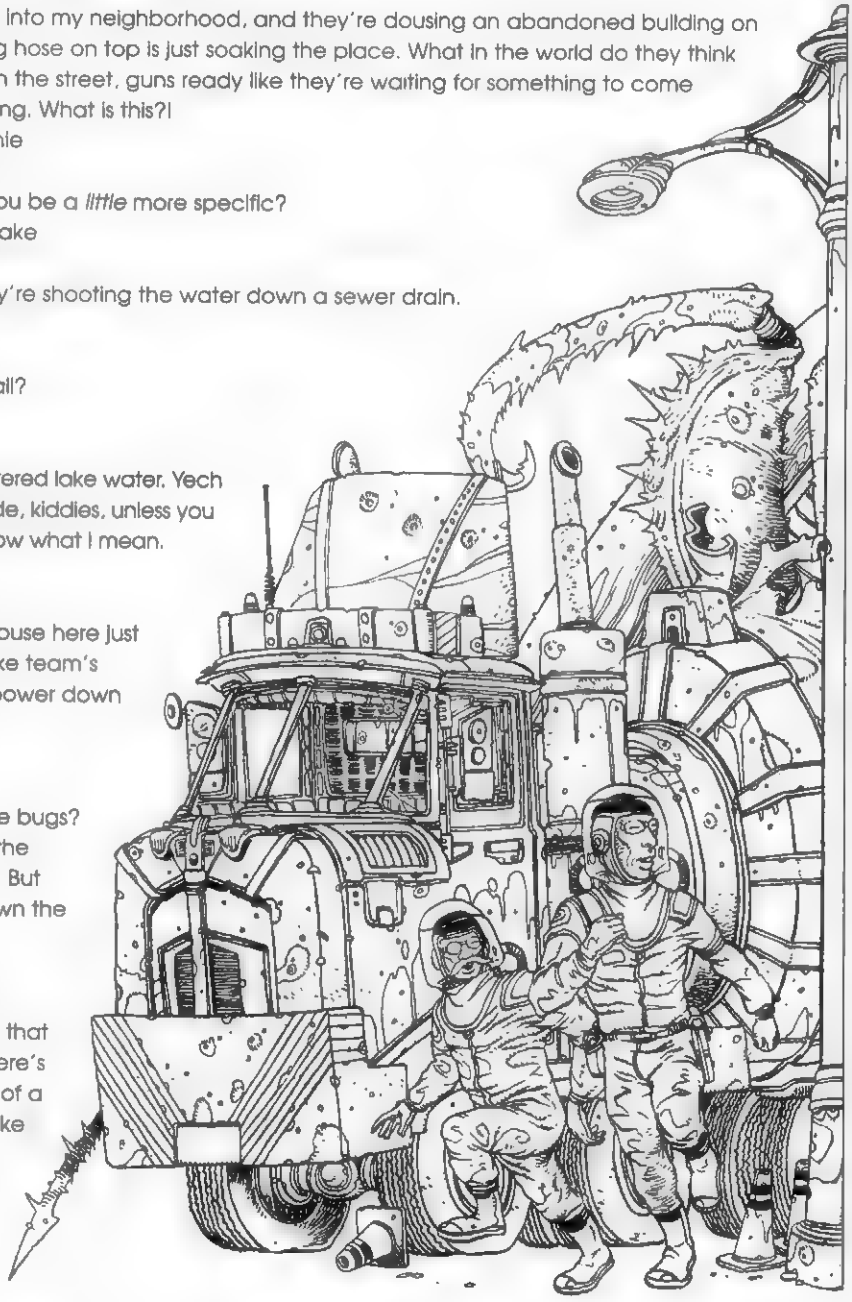
◗ So it's water, then? That's all?
◗ Greylake

◗ Seems to be, from what Valere tells me. It looks like unfiltered lake water. Yech ... no wonder they're wearing chem suits. Better stay inside, kiddies, unless you want to catch some god-awful bug ... er ... you know what I mean.
◗ Max

◗ Holy fragging drek! The fragging wall of the warehouse here just ripped open and a swarm of bugs came out! The strike team's opening up on it ... good Lord, they've got a lot of firepower down there.
◗ Bernie

◗ So what is this, Ares is coming in and flushing out all the bugs? Is that what this is all about? I mean, it makes sense—the choppers, the firepower, the rush hour in astral space. But where does the lake water fit in? Are they trying to drown the bugs, or what?
◗ Greylake

◗ Another update from Valere: she took a closer look at that lake water they're slinging around. It's not just water. There's something else in it, something that's causing a little bit of a background count or something around the water. It's like a haze in astral space, she says. So whatever's in that water, it's magical somehow, and it seems to be rooting out at least some of the bugs.
◗ Max



❶ HOLY FRAGGING DREK!!!! Another bug just climbed out of the warehouse ... it's big I mean BIG. It's a fragging queen!! It's ripping the tanker to shreds! Those troopers don't have a chance!
❶ Bernie

❶ A queen?? Whoa. Cool. Where are you at? I never saw one before. That would be so cool to see.
❶ Hammerfist

❶ They've called in the cavalry—a couple of choppers. They're opening up on the queen. It's like the fragging Fourth of July down there. Man, those Ares guys are toast—
Whaaa . ?! I don't believe it! I can't fragging *believe* it! FRAG, THEY JUST AXED THE QUEEN!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
❶ Bernie

❶ What?? They killed it? Those things are nearly impossible to kill! Damn—and I missed it!
❶ Hammerfist

❶ Well, sure as I'm decking here, they just killed it.
❶ Bernie

❶ I can hear gunfire farther down the block, but it's too far away to see anything. What does Ares think it's trying to pull? Are they gonna take on all the bugs in Chicago, one by one?
❶ Greylake

❶ Drek, a squadron of Yellowjacket attack choppers just buzzed my apartment building! They were heading toward Grant Park ... there seems to be a big air battle out that way. I can't see very well from here, but it looks like a posse of wasp spirits are duking it out with the attack choppers. And the choppers are winning!
❶ Sleeper

❶ Guys, I just talked to Valere again. She says the astral haze has attached itself to some of the bugs, and is draining their energy. I don't know what the frag Ares put in that water, but whatever it is, it seems to be making the difference in the firefights. Contrary to expectations, the troops aren't getting their butts kicked.
❶ Max

❶ Though I wouldn't go so far as to say they're doing "well," either, Max. From what I've seen and heard, they've taken quite a beating—they're just giving back one better. Who knows ... maybe they actually have a snowball's chance in hell of winning this thing.
❶ Globe

❶ Stranger things have happened.
❶ Believer

*****END TRANSMISSION*****
*****END TRANSMISSION*****
*****END TRANSMISSION*****

◗ So let me see if I got this straight. The "astral haze" everybody keeps referring to is supposed to be this Strain-III-Beta that Ares let loose in the Zone to kill the bugs? So what's with the water?
◗ Hal

◗ Think about it for a moment, Hal. Strain-III has no physical component. So how do you get it to go where you want it to? One way is to combine it somehow with something physical that you *can* send where you want it, and if that physical object is also living, it will push the Strain-III along with it. Hence the lake water. All the bacteria and stuff in the water gives it enough of a living presence to force the Strain-III in a certain direction.
◗ Duckie

◗ Of course, that same bacteria "and stuff" makes the water fragging unsanitary. Just goes to show how much Ares really cares about the well-being of the folks in the CZ. You'll notice they bundled up their guys nice and safe inside chem suits. Ares knew the danger to the local people and ignored it. Flooded sewers, diseases, devil rat corpses turning up all over creation—I hear it's a real mess.
◗ Birdwatcher

◗ I still don't see why they needed to get the Strain-III to go anywhere. I mean, why didn't they just open up the containers and let the stuff float around until it found a bug hive?
◗ Naysayer
"Stop the world, I wanna get off!"

◗ Here's the way I scan it. If Ares just let the virus loose anywhere in the CZ, for all they knew it was just as likely to wander over to Detroit and find food as to latch onto an insect hive. On the other hand, the closer they could get it to a group of bugs, the more likely it would latch onto them and woohoo, you've got yourself an astral bugzapper.
◗ Reilly

BEYOND THE WALL
Posted: 28 February 2058

◗ Captain Chaos, I got this from a chummer of mine—a corporal in the UCAS military, who was stationed on the CZ Wall when Operation Extermination went down. I thought you all might find it interesting enough to post on Shadowland.
◗ Scarecrow

◗ We aim to please.
◗ Captain Chaos
Transmitted: 1 April 2058 at 11:24:25 (EST)

The past week has been such a nightmare, I can't wait to get off this detail. I knew you'd be dying for the inside scoop on what went down in Chi-town, boyo. Well, join the club. The fact is, nobody really knows exactly what happened. I can only tell you what I know.

We'd been hearing rumors of Ares sending people over the Wall more and more frequently. The Knight Errant boys stationed on our section of the Wall didn't seem to know much more than we did, but it was clear something big was going on. We just had no idea what, exactly. Even when they finally launched their operation, they didn't tell us drek. We had orders to keep our patrols tight and make sure nothing got out (or in) throughout that day. Period. That turned out to be tougher than you might imagine. *You* try concentrating on your patrol schedule when attack choppers are duking it out with wasp spirits near the Truman Tower a few miles away, or when you look through your binocs and see a skirmish between a couple of bugs and a KE Firewatch team. It was a fragging mess.

Nobody expected Knight Errant to just up and abandon us here on the Wall once things settled down. I don't think many people realized just how big a contribution good ol' Mr. Knight and Ares made to keeping up the CZ. When they pulled out, we were left with a skeleton crew of UCAS Army regulars and National Guardsmen to enforce the blockade. Which wasn't much.

◗ Hey, wait a tic. I thought the UCAS Army was up on the Wall. What does Ares have to do with it?
◗ Tservo

◗ Well, after all the rioting when the Big D got offed, and with all the trouble broiling along the borders, the warmongers had bigger fish to fry than the half-dozen slots who try to sneak across the CZ Wall every week. Damien Knight's always been buddy-buddy with the government, so it was only natural for him to pitch in and have his Knight Errant goons babysit the CZ, neh?
◗ Matador

◗ Not to mention that Ares HQ in Detroit is just a stone's throw away. Knight was probably covering his own hoop. If I had bugs living on the other side of the fence from me, I'd fragging want to make sure they *stayed* over there.
◗ Yori

◗ Stone's throw? Maybe if a troll is throwing the stone. Where'd you learn your geography, Yori?
◗ Fiddler

◗ Frag off, Fiddler. You can laugh now, but Ares has been eyeing that real estate along the lakefront for years. When y'all wind up in Damien Knight's private little dictatorship, you'll see.
◗ Yori

Once the Ares op went down, people started coming out of the CZ. First it was just a few, sneaking out through the gaps where Ares used to keep watch. But then more started coming, braving the kill-zones. Our first instinct was to follow our standing orders and take them out, but we'd been hearing rumors that Ares had cleared out all the bugs. I heard the officers arguing about it that night in the command tent. Half of them said that with nothing to contain, what's the point of a Containment Zone? The other half said we couldn't trust the lives of the people under our care to a *rumor*

that the bugs might be gone. I don't think I've ever felt such tension in the ranks, and to be honest I don't know which way I would've gone if I'd been in command. I'm glad I wasn't.

I can't even begin to describe my relief when Haeffner made his State of the Union speech twelve hours later and formally ended the blockade. I thought that would be the end of it. Unfortunately, that was just the beginning of the real mess. People started flocking over the Wall in fragging *droves*. I swear, at least a thousand came through that first day, and more followed over the next week or so. Everyone wanted out before the president had a chance to change his mind.

The problem wasn't the refugees—it was the people on our side. After watching the Wall for two years and praying every night that the bugs wouldn't come their way, the rest of Chicagoland wasn't about to welcome scads of refugees who might be bugs in disguise. Fighting broke out along the CZ border. This time, we weren't the ones opening fire on the escapees—the civilians were doing it. They got together and decided that if we weren't going to keep those poor slots locked up inside the CZ, they'd take matters into their own hands. And we got caught in the middle of it all. Pretty ironic, that the soldiers who'd spent two years doing our damnedest to keep people inside the CZ ended up helping them get across the Wall in one piece. We had it rough, and we weren't the only ones. The rest of the city was plagued by riots, protests, even attacks on incoming refugees. "Keep the bugs out!" and that sort of drek. Everyone was scared, us included. All things considered, it wasn't the best week of my life. But I guess it could've been worse. Those poor people really could've been bugs.

- So Ares is right? The bugs really are gone?
- Skeptic

- Who knows? But I don't think President Haeffner could've kept up the CZ even if he'd wanted to. Not once Ares pulled its troops out.
- Hobbes

- Is it just me, or does it seem odd that after going to so much trouble for two years to keep the people in the CZ walled up, Ares pulled out so suddenly? Especially if they weren't absolutely positive that the bugs had been taken care of—and how could they have been that sure?
- Puck

- Knight doesn't care about Chicago. He cares about the bottom line. Guarding the CZ ceased to be in his best interests, so he bugged out. (So to speak.)
- Yankee

- I don't buy it, Yankee. Knight has gone to a lot of expense and effort to hunt the bugs. It doesn't seem like him to do a 180-degree turn and not care about them anymore. There has to be some other explanation.
- Birdwatcher

- Actually, Ares hasn't pulled out *all* of its troops. They just want everybody to think that. Knight Errant helped put down the riots after the CZ went down. And you can bet our chum D.K. has people in and around the area, keeping an eye on things.
- SamIM

Things quieted down eventually, but it's still a fragging mess. On paper, the Zone is part of the city again—but nobody wanted to have anything to do with it. Despite Knight's reassurances, people are still afraid that the bugs aren't really gone. "Concerned citizens" who live near the CZ wall have contracted with private security firms to keep refugees out of their neighborhoods. And they're not always polite about it, either, if you know what I mean. Things are even worse on the other side of the Wall. About half the relief workers who went in as part of the governor's disaster aid didn't make it back, and those who did had little desire to go back again. Relief efforts were abandoned pretty quickly, and the CZ has pretty much been left to its own devices. The government is content to ignore it, and most of the people in the Zone seem content to be ignored.

I've heard we're going to be pulled out and assigned elsewhere. Not a moment too soon if you ask me. One thing that I can tell you for sure, chummer. In reality, if not officially, the Containment Zone is just as isolated from the rest of the world as it was before.

INSIDERS
By Zoned
Posted: 1 March 2058

If I have to listen to one more person going off on how grateful we should all be that Ares "rescued" us from the bugs, I swear I'm gonna throttle them. It's like everyone's forgotten everything that happened over the past two years. Knight Errant caused this whole thing in the first place, stirring up a hornet's nest and then setting off a fragging nuke to clean up their mess. The government walled us all up in here like fragging criminals and left us for dead. We've gotten along fine without their help for two years while they treated us like we didn't matter. Now they douse us in lake water, wave their hands and say, "The bugs are gone," and we're supposed to thank our lucky stars and kiss their feet for saving us? I don't fragging think so.

Besides, who do they think they're fooling? They still don't give a frag about us. The governor of Illinois may spout the "reunite Chicago" line to look good on the trid, talking about all those poor "lost souls" in the CZ. But you only have to look outside your window to see that she's not jumping at the chance to tear the Wall down. Nobody on the outside wants to have anything to do with us. They think we're all crazy, or desperate, or bugs in disguise. And if that's what it takes to keep them on their side of the Wall, leaving us the frag alone, that's fine with me.

- Let me get this straight . . this guy actually likes it in the Zone??
- Alexis

- He's gotta be a bug.
- Naysayer

"Stop the world, I wanna get off!"

strong, not like those pitiful-looking slots they like to parade around on the trid. We've spent the past two years locked up in here with the bugs and the dregs of humanity. And they think we haven't learned to take care of ourselves? Well, they're gonna have a rude awakening if they try to frag with us.

Once the troops pulled out, me and the rest of the Howlers set ourselves up in one of the old Army watchtowers along the Wall. Even picked up some heavy firepower from a KE team too busy hunting bugs to pay attention to a couple of gangers. We control our turf on our side of the Wall, and the slags on the other side should stay there if they know what's good for them. We don't need or want any more of their "help."

› Geez, if everybody in the Zone is this whacked, I say Ares oughta nuke it again and save us all some trouble
› Machiavelli

› You're all heart. What about the poor slots cowering in their basements 'cause they don't believe the bugs are really gone? Or the ones who don't go out 'cause the gangs and warlords are at each others throats day and night, and a body can't cross the fragging street without Kevlar pajamas?
› Kitt

› Living in fear is no way to live
› Machiavelli

› Hey, it ain't paranoia if they really *are* out to get you
› Sage
Knows all, but tells less

› I think Zoned's point of view may be a bit extreme, but it's not all *that* far off. The Zone has developed its own set of Darwinist values and a survival-based economy. All that is starting to change, but big changes don't happen overnight. It's just like when the Berlin Wall fell in the late twentieth century. You can tear down the physical barrier in a matter of hours, but the mental and emotional ones can take years to erode. If ever
› Hobbes

› I'M NOT A FRAGGING BUG YOU FRAGGING **<<5 Mp Deleted by SysOp>>**
› Zoned

› Play nice, kiddies
› Captain Chaos
Transmitted: 5 April 2058 at 04:15:20 (EST)

› Seriously, though, with the bugs gone, the CZ is every anarchist's dream. The government's still trying to figure out what the frag they're going to do about it, the corps are only beginning to think about recovering any goodies that may still be laying around, and I haven't even mentioned all the nooks and crannies so popular with squatters, gangs, shadowrunners, bugs and other nefarious types. The CZ is a haven for anybody who makes their living off the misery of others
› Nocode

A lot of people have already left the Zone, and I say good riddance. Get rid of the weak; let the strong remain. And we are

◗ Takes even longer when you *don't* tear down the physical barrier. Governor Colucci hasn't exactly jumped at the chance to demolish the Wall in a grand, symbolic gesture. The Wall's a convenient way o keep all the malcontents locked up inside.
◗ Winger

◗ Hey, maybe Governor Schultz should think about doing that with the Seattle Barrens
◗ Tservo

FUMIGATION
By Samwise
Posted: 7 March 2058

Don't let Ares propaganda fool you. The bug spirits may be down, but they're certainly not out. Now, I'm not saying that Ares didn't do a good job of weakening the insects. Their little extermination effort killed drekloads of the bugs, and weakened lots more enough to make them easy pickings for even a novice bughunter. Clear evidence of this is the sheer number of bug corpses scattered around the streets of downtown Chicago in the days after Ares did its stuff. But the thing about bugs is, for every one you see there are a thousand more you don't. Ares may have cleared out a few dozen bug hives, but how many more did the bughunter teams miss? We haven't seen the last of them—and when they come back, they're going to be bigger, tougher and smarter.

◗ So the Strain-III Beta doesn't actually kill the bugs—it just weakens them?
◗ Winsome

◗ From what I've heard about the stuff, it'll kill the bugs if you give it enough time. Assuming they don't find some way to decontaminate themselves. But in the meantime it makes them sick, and it's a heckuva lot faster to just go in and mow them down. Give a runner a bad case of the flu and you'll get much the same results
◗ Grym

◗ Heyheyhey! Don't go giving the corps any ideas, man.
◗ Tservo

Setting aside Ares's expedition for a moment, I've noted a couple of disturbing new trends with the bugs lately. For starters, they're a lot more subtle. They're no longer trying to achieve their goals (whatever the frag those might be) by openly invading a city. They're not going to make the same mistakes they made with Chicago, which earned them a nuclear bomb down their throat followed by two years in hell and then mass death by Ares's little gengineered virus. I've heard rumors of more and more disguised bugs turning up in corporations, low-level government positions, and god knows where else. Even the late General Yeats, a candidate for our nation's highest office, apparently had some sort of connection with the bugs. Worse, some people are willingly helping the insect spirits. Not just the insect shamans, who're bad enough, but normal folks who've joined one of the so-called bug cults and think the insects are the second coming or something.

By far the oddest stories I've heard concern bug spirits that live on after their queen cacks it. Maybe they just linger for a little while before keeling over, or maybe they weren't really from that hive, but were just visiting or something (who knows ... they're bugs!). But I've also heard theories that these bugs have figured out a way to go free after their queen got killed. I don't know how true those stories are, but it's enough to make me wonder ... and worry.

◗ Maybe that's what's up with these bug cults. A free bug spirit is trying to emulate its queen and start a hive because it no longer has one of its own. Only instead of insects, it's using humans.
◗ Hal

◗ An insect hive made up of humans? That's too fragging weird for me. Hal
◗ Greylake

CABRINI REFUGE
By Stone
2 March 2058

There comes a time when every man looks back and hopes he made all the right decisions, took all the right paths and did something meaningful with his life. Today I look back, and I find few regrets. And now I stand in the midst of a grand change, as the world around me shifts in ways none of us had dared to hope for, or had cause to fear. Yet our ability to cope with change is what makes us all human. Yes, all. I know some people out there choose to call my kind monsters, flesh-eaters, abominations. But I've seen the humanity of my people. I've learned their sorrow, their pain, first-hand ... from working among them, and then by becoming one of them. Trapped behind this Wall like a rat in a cage, I try to carry on my people's struggle, but I fear that my time has come. I can only hope that one day the winds of change will blow our way, and the world will let us walk with the rest of metahumanity instead of condemning us forever to this prison of despair.

I found that passage as I was going through Tamir Grey's things the day he was killed. I thought it'd make a good epitaph. He led our people out of the dark times, when others saw us as nothing more than mindless beasts. We might have stayed beasts, too, if Tamir Grey hadn't opened people's eyes. He was the one who went to the Metahuman Rights Coalition and asked them to help us get our rights. He was the one who spoke out; he was the one who made us heard and brought us Special Order 162. That day, the Cabrini Refuge became a symbol of what we had achieved. All too soon they repealed the law and took our rights away again. But for a short time, we'd won.

Today the Refuge has become another kind of symbol—a symbol of betrayal. Knight Errant turned their backs on us once before, when they abandoned us to angry crowds outside the

Refuge four years ago. Nothing has changed, except the magnitude of injustice. They've killed us now. They killed *him*. And we will not forget it. Things have changed around us for too long. Now it's time for us to make *them* change, and take what we deserve.

❶ Anyone care to translate this drek?
❶ Emilio

❶ It amazes me how ignorant people are sometimes. Let me clue you in, chummer, since you apparently haven't been paying attention. When Ares let their Strain-III drek loose on the city, it took out a significant portion of the paranatural population along with the insect spirits. The ghouls in the Cabrini Refuge are dual-natured, so they got hit just as hard as the bugs did. Ghoultown has become a ghost town. My guess is, our friend Stone is a member of the newly formed and rather militant GLL—Ghoul Liberation League.
❶ Reilly

❶ I hear the ghouls have thrown in with the Metahuman Rights Coalition and also the Empowerment Coalition, former Veep candidate Anne Penchyk's baby. Equal rights for everyone. They're touting the deaths of the Cabrini ghouls as proof positive of how metahumans are persecuted. 'Course, they conveniently leave out the fact that the ghouls aren't officially recognized as metahumans.
❶ SamIM

❶ Actually, now that the way people become ghouls has been scientifically pinpointed to a disease (as opposed to the old "alternate goblinization" line), they seem to be on stronger ground in claiming metahuman status. After all, some poor slot who comes down with VITAS-3 doesn't get shot by the doctor for a bounty.
❶ Nocode

❶ Yeah, but somebody with VITAS-3 doesn't go around eating people.
❶ Doc

❶ Minor technicality. Besides, ghouls don't actually *go around* eating people. They only need to consume about 1 percent of their body weight in actual metahuman flesh every month. Dunkelzahn's will pays out big nuyen to the first company that creates synthetic flesh for the ghouls to eat, so the race is on

Ghouls are hardly casually accepted, but their position has been steadily improving, especially after Tamir Grey's diaries were published last year during all the election fever. That garnered terrific publicity and support for their cause. A literate ghoul, who actually wrote pretty moving prose ... now there's something you don't see every day. Kinda put a dent in the whole "mindless flesh-eating monster" image.
❶ Scrivler

❶ Big deal. I've seen apes who can do sign language. You can teach any animal a few tricks.
❶ Emilio

❶ I really, really hate ignorant people
❶ Reilly

❶ Not to rain on anyone's martyr parade, but Tamir ain't dead. He might've dropped out of sight for awhile, but he's still out there somewhere. I came across some info that he'd been picked up by Ares (along with some other ghouls) a short time before Operation Extermination went off. But Tamir was smart enough to escape. Last I heard, he'd turned up somewhere in Wisconsin.
❶ Spider

❶ What do you mean, "escaped"? What the frag was Ares doing, kidnapping a bunch of ghouls?
❶ Reilly

❶ I dunno, but nobody's seen Tamir's body. It sure as heck wasn't in Cabrini—don't ask me how I know. He's still alive, but he wants everybody to think he's dead. Even his own people. Don't know why, but I'm sure he has his reasons
❶ Spider

❶ Or maybe your info is totally fragged and Grey really is dead.
❶ Naysayer

"Stop the world, I wanna get off!"

FALLOUT
Posted: 17 March 2058

❶ This came from a recent edition of the student paper at the University of Chicago—you know, the big magic school. It was first posted over on Magicknet, but since it seemed relevant, I included it in this document
❶ Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 1 April 2058 at 13:10:44 (EST)

It is time for Chicagoland's magical community to stand up and take action. We have stood by long enough and watched others corrupt our astral space—first the insect spirits, then the government's quarantine, then Ares with its nuclear detonation, and now Ares again with its latest abomination, Strain-III. They think they can do whatever they want without regard for the consequences. Ignorance is their excuse, like an ostrich sticking its head in the sand— ignorance of magic and its potential dangers. That's nothing new to the megacorps, but this time they've gone too far. By releasing massive quantities of an astral virus in the Containment Zone, they have created a magical disaster of unimaginable proportions in our backyard—yet the world turns a blind eye to our plight.

If an oil tanker spills its cargo on the high seas, everyone is quick to condemn the corporation responsible, and cleanup efforts are swift and decisive. Why? Because the spill endangers the wildlife and the ecological balance of the entire surrounding area. What Ares did to Chicago was no different. Strain-III is their oil, and the Containment Zone is the sea. Nothing is safe from this relentless organism, because it does not discriminate. Everything from a devil rat to a rare Awakened specimen to an astrally active

magician is fair game for the virus. It is impossible to tally the number of paranormal creatures already slain by the virus, especially if one includes spirits and elementals. The delicate balance of astral space in Chicagoland has been upset, and no one is sure how far-reaching the effects might be.

● Oh great ... here come the bleeding hearts. Show college students anything that's suffering, even if it just chewed its own leg off, and they're up in arms. What's next? "Save the Bugs"??
● Dori

One of Ares's biggest lies in the days after Operation Extermination was the claim that the Strain-III would quickly run out of food after it had weakened the insect spirits. But this has not happened. Samples taken of the virus are just as strong today as they were two weeks ago. Ares apparently overlooked a critical factor in their calculations: the background count that pervades the entire Containment Zone. At best, such an oversight shows stunning carelessness and a frighteningly casual disregard for the consequences of their actions.

● Oh, this is just fragging lovely. Get rid of one plague and replace it with another? Didn't they bother to consider what effect a background count would have on the virus? Seems like one *frag* of an oversight to me
● Scarecrow

● What makes you think it was an oversight?
● Lone Gunman

● Hang on a tic, I'm confused. This Strain-III drek lives by feeding off magical energy, right? Well, if the background count is providing that energy, wouldn't it run out eventually? That would clear up the virus problem and the background count problem all at once
● Kitt

● Background count occurs naturally in response to certain traumas. Intense emotion, usually pain and suffering, fear or death, are typical causes, but there are numerous others. This virus may drain the energy, but the natural "inertia" of living beings experiencing and emoting constantly supplies more energy and renews the background count
● Professor J
jjacobs@mitt.edu

● But by that same logic, doc, wouldn't that energy have to come from *somewhere*?
● Ivo

● There is boundless energy on the metaplanes, power beyond the comprehension of any living thing. The feeding habits of a weak, localized virus could scarcely begin to tap that energy
● Professor J
jjacobs@mitt.edu

◗ Maybe it can, Professor. Scan on . .
◗ Sage
"Knows all, but tells less"

Already, magicians around the city have noticed a new and disturbing trend in the aftermath of Operation Extermination: the Voids. These new phenomena seem to be caused by a weakening of the fabric of astral space. Normal magical activities such as spellcasting and summoning cause a slight drain of astral energy that is barely perceptible to us. The effect of the Strain-III virus, however, is orders of magnitude beyond this. As the voracious Strain-III virus depletes the magical energy of the Containment Zone, the natural inertia of the metaplanes cannot compensate. The result? Voids—regions where astral space is dim and nearly lifeless.

These Voids are extremely dangerous to astral travelers. Though they have not yet caused any deaths that we know of, shock and mental trauma are common symptoms of an encounter with one. The faculty of the Thaumaturgy Department here at U of C has recommended that the governor post an official advisory over the public newsnets, warning magicians to avoid the Containment Zone. We have already issued such a warning ourselves, but the word needs to be spread further. The Voids seemingly appear and disappear at random; a team of researchers from local universities—including representatives from U of C—have yet to establish a pattern. Dr. Howard Tierney, initiated hermetic magician and chairman of the Thaumaturgy Department, recently stated, "Our goal is to determine where and when these Voids will appear so that authorities can issue proper travel advisories for projecting magicians. Also, learning their location will hopefully bring us one step closer to determining their cause."

These Voids pose a danger not only to the magicians of Chicago, but to magical practitioners throughout the UCAS. No one can predict what will happen if this phenomena is allowed to rage unchecked. Before we know it, all of astral space around Chicago may be damaged beyond repair. We must work together to find a solution to this crisis, before it is the end of us all.

◗ Melodrama and politics aside, this post is more than a little worrisome. A chummer of mine nearly ran into a few of these Voids inside the CZ. He described the astral in Chicago as a hunk of Swiss cheese. Background count everywhere, except for these holes all over the place, where there's almost the reverse of a background count. From what I've heard, the Voids sound a lot like the foveae down in Aztlan. Can anybody confirm the connection?
◗ Gael

◗ They may be related, but they're not the same. They have similar effects, but I could say the same thing about a mage who leaves the atmosphere and then takes a jaunt into astral space. In all three cases, you get a very lucky mage, a very dead mage or a vegetable.
◗ Doc

◗ Y'know, this slag's probably right. The Voids popping up in the CZ probably *are* related to the Strain-III draining away the background counts somehow. I mean, it makes sense, doesn't it? Conservation of energy, and all that drek?
◗ Tservo

◗ The laws of conventional physics do not apply when dealing with astral space, my friend. But nevertheless, the possibility is there. If, as our student writer suggests, we are dealing with a weakening of the very fabric of astral space, then who can say what might happen if the effect is not curbed? Further study is surely warranted.
◗ Professor J
jjacobs@mitt.edu

◗ Everyone with a magical stake in the CZ has been bending over backwards to find out what exactly is causing these astral voids and to figure out how to undo the damage.
◗ Tanner

◗ Aside from the U of C, other groups funding research and/or shadowruns to discover more about Strain-III are the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Thaumaturgy (MIT&T), the independent magicians of Little Earth, the Dunkelzahn Institute of Magical Research, and even the government's new Magical Security Task Force. They don't seem to be working together quite like the author of this post suggested (gee, can't imagine why ...) but it seems everybody wants in on this one
◗ Globe

◗ Who can blame them? I mean, who's to say the Voids—or the Strain-III—will limit themselves to Chicago?
◗ Yori

◗ Here's an interesting tidbit. From the astral recons Knight Errant did of the area before Operation Extermination began, they figured that the Sanctum, where that wacko Two-Spirits set up shop, was just about the only place in the Zone without a background count. Weird, neh? And you know what's weirder? Since Operation Extermination went down, no one's seen or heard from Two-Spirits since. In fact, the entire Sanctum's empty.
◗ G-Man

SHADOWS OF OBLIVION

By Caruso
Posted: 24 March 2058

I've been in the CZ since the Wall went up, working as an enforcer for one of the warlords. In the month since the president officially ended the quarantine, plenty has changed inside Chicago. Anyone who runs the shadows had better be up on those changes, or you're gonna have a real short career. I'm posting this here so that anyone who decides to pay a visit to the Zone will have a little better idea of who's who now that the blockade's been lifted.

During the two years that the CZ was officially in place, Catherine "The Terrible" Cunningham managed to organize a good fifty percent of Chicago under her control. She had a knack for getting her hands on hot tech, the kinds of things the rest of the warlords could only dream about. She also had another advantage: a cadre of magicians to help fend off the bugs. This gave her quite an edge over most of the other petty dictators in the Zone. Then, almost overnight, her iron grip shattered. Operation Extermination evened the playing field magically, and Catherine found out someone had reached up her sleeve and stolen her ace. Almost immediately, some of the lesser warlords made plays for power. The south-central and southwest areas of the Zone are still a mess as Catherine struggles to maintain her territory. She feels besieged on all fronts; rumor has it that she's gotten so paranoid, she no longer trusts anyone outside her inner circle.

- Catherine was in league with the bugs. That's how come everything fell apart for her when Ares came in, plain and simple.
- Cog

- Yeah, right ... look, magic and the bugs don't have to be behind everything. Next you'll be saying that Ares and the government had a secret agreement with the insects.
- Quasar

- They can't hide the truth forever.
- Lone Gunman

One of the biggest players in the Zone is Tom Nishio, a recent arrival. Many people question his sanity at deliberately coming to Chicago. But he saw a niche to be filled in the Containment Zone—namely, its lack of an organized black market. Nishio apparently decided that the money to be made outweighed the risks. I expect he also didn't want to give the Mafia a chance to step in and take over. He brought in a group of trusted goons, some starting capital (money and gear), and set up shop along Lake Shore Drive. Most of his shipments come in across the lake, for convenience as well as protection against raids by the other warlords (who're all landlocked).

- When he says "biggest" player, he's not kidding. Nishio used to be a sumo wrestler, and at last count he was skirting 250 kilos. But I've heard he's lost some weight since then.
- Duckie

When the government ended the quarantine, organized crime began to reassert itself in Chicago, but not exactly overnight. The Mafia was pretty big in Chi-town before the CZ went up, but the Family bigwigs didn't want to start moving their people back in until they were sure it was safe. They did have one thing going for them, however—Marcus Quinn. A low-ranking lieutenant in the Chicago Mob, Quinn had gotten trapped in the Zone when the Wall went up. Over the past two years he solidified his position and the Mafia's among the Zone's other kingpins. He started out with a few goons really low on the totem pole and a couple of mafioso wannabes, and much to everyone's surprise actually turned that ragtag bunch into something. They weren't terribly influential in the grand scheme of things, but managed to keep tabs on the Mafia's interests in the CZ until everyone came back. Now that he's no longer completely cut off from the outside world, Quinn has managed to reestablish contact with the McCaskill family in Milwaukee and let them know the status of operations in the CZ. His efforts have not gone unnoticed, and Quinn is definitely in the Family's good graces right now. Word is that the McCaskills are trying to decide exactly how much of a presence they want to reestablish in Chicago, and who exactly is going to run the show. In the meantime, they have Quinn looking after things. Looks like Quinn traded two years of life in hell for a promotion to the fast track.

- If this Quinn guy even worked for the Mob. For all anyone knows, he was a grocer who watched bugs eat some made men and decided the money lay in being part of the Family. Unless Don "Tools" O'Toole walks out and claims what's left of Chicago for his Family, McCaskill is going to stop everyone and anyone in the way of his taking control of Chicago. First order of biz is to send Marcus Quinn a little welcome-back present right between the eyes and take his piece of the pie. If "The Lion" is willing to take on Don Roland "The Greek" Stephanopoulos in Detroit, he ain't going to let no pissant from the CZ stop him.
- Johnny the Bug

  "Not that kind of bug, you moron."

Another player in the Zone is King Vlad, the ork who presides over the Northwest section. During the quarantine, Vlad focused on protecting his enclave against the insect spirits. Now that the bugs aren't so much of a problem, he's become bolder and more aggressive, raiding neighboring warlords and gangs. Vlad has even crossed the wall and hit relief stations and warehouses on the other side. He's ticked off a lot of citizens outside the Zone, but Vlad and his people have so far kept out of serious trouble. Their hit-and-run tactics are hard to thwart and harder to predict, and no cop in his right mind will pursue someone into the CZ. The things Vlad takes from the outside, he uses to supply his own little corner of the black market. While Vlad's doings aren't a big enough threat to Nishio's operation to warrant any particular attention, Nishio has been watching Vlad nice and close to keep his ambitions in check.

- Don't let all this neo-anarchist drek fool you. The CZ isn't exactly turning into a nice vacation spot. There are still some bugs (despite Ares' wishful thinking) and the Strain-III to worry about, the gangs and warlords are at each other's throats, and the ghouls are at everybody's throats. It's not a nice place to visit, and I pity the poor slots who have to live there. Chicago has become a place where anything can be had for a price.
- Naysayer

  "Stop the world, I wanna get off!"

- And if you're not careful, you may end up paying with your life.
- Sage

  "Knows all, but tells less"

GAME INFORMATION

The following section provides additional information for using Boston, Detroit and Chicago in **Shadowrun** campaigns. For Boston and Detroit, **Facts at a Glance, Getting In/Out** and **Cost of Living** present data on demographics, transportation systems, and the cost of goods and services. This section also presents local-color elements and sample adventure ideas for campaigns set in each city.

Chicago is a unique environment, and so presents a special case. Because the Chicago Containment Zone has been quarantined for the past two years, standard demographic, transportation and cost-of-living information does not apply. The information in the Bug City rulebook is, for the most part, still valid. Though the situation has changed, the law of the sprawl remains the same. The Rules applicable to Chicago include those for Strain-III bacteria, free bug spirits, and the mysterious "gaps" in astral space called Voids.

FACTS AT A GLANCE

BOSTON

Population: 4,890,000 (Boston Area Metropolitan Complex)
- Human: 66%
- Elf: 9%
- Dwarf: 7%
- Ork: 10%
- Troll: 7%
- Other: 1%

Regional Telecomm Grid Access: NA/UCAS-NE
Local Telecomm Grid Access: NA/UCAS-NE/BOS

DETROIT

Population: 6,207,000 (Greater Detroit Metropolitan Complex)
- Human: 65%
- Elf: 7%
- Dwarf: 10%
- Ork: 11%
- Troll: 6%
- Other: 1%

Regional Telecomm Grid Access: NA/UCAS-MW
Local Telecomm Grid Access: NA/UCAS-MW/DET

GETTING IN/OUT

BOSTON

Boston's major highways include Route 95, Route 128 and Interstate 495. Route 95 runs north/south around the outer boundary of the metroplex and merges with Route 128 in the area north of downtown. Route 93 runs south from New Hampshire, through the downtown district and then south and east out along Cape Cod. Interstate 495 swings out wide from the metroplex but connects with routes to many of the central and southern parts of Massachusetts. The entire metroplex area is crowded with traffic congestion and accidents, and gamemasters are encouraged to throw in some of both if the characters do much driving in the city.

Boston's "T" system branches out from downtown Boston as far north as Nashua, New Hampshire and as far south as Providence, Rhode Island. The different "T" trains are fairly inexpensive and provide runners with an opportunity to disappear into crowds, but they leave passengers with little direct control over their travel and may lead to encounters with gangs and other criminals that work the system.

Logan International Airport handles all air traffic into and out of the metroplex. Incoming and outgoing flights from all over the world, including suborbital shuttles and rapid-transit spaceplane flights, use Logan. Security at the airport is ultra-tight, due to terrorist incidents directed at corporate executives, diplomats, and other potential terrorist targets who use the airlines.

Boston Harbor features facilities for the moderate amount of shipping that the city receives, as well as other local marine traffic, such as ferries to the islands and Cape Cod.

DETROIT

Detroit has several major highways, all of which are well maintained by UCAS standards. Route 75 (north-south) and Route 94 (east-west) both run through downtown Detroit. Route 275 and Route 96 pass through Oakland and Detroit-Windsor, respectively.

Detroit City Airport and the Detroit Metro Airport handle most commercial air traffic for the city, and several commuter airlines maintain various private helipads in the downtown area. Generally, Knight Errant provides airport security, which is somewhat less restrictive than security at the Seattle-Tacoma Airport. Passengers and cargo on international flights, however, are subject to more scrutiny than passengers and cargo on domestic flights.

Detroit also has an excellent rail system, and trains pass through Dearborn, downtown Detroit, Royal Oaks and Pontiac. Currently, train travel has come back into vogue with many of Detroit's corporate set and provides an inexpensive alternative to air travel for wage slaves and others of limited means. (A UCASRail train making its way through Detroit can provide an interesting starting point or scenario setting for adventures in Detroit—a train car provides a reasonably secure site for meeting with a Mr. Johnson, and a hijacked train provides immediate action for runners.)

COST OF LIVING

The following lists provide a range of costs for goods and services in Boston and Detroit. (See **Bug City** for a range of costs for Chicago.) All figures reflect the going black-market prices, which may fluctuate depending on current conditions.

BOSTON

Item/Service	Cost (percentage of standard Seattle cost)
Weapons	100–200
Ammunition	100–200
Explosives	120–200
Accessories	100–200
Armor	100–130
Security/Communication Devices	80–100
Survival Gear	100–150
Electronics	80–120
Cyberware	80–200
Magical Equipment	60–110
Vehicles	100–120

DETROIT

Item/Service	Cost (percentage of standard Seattle cost)
Weapons	70–130
Ammunition	90–200
Explosives	90–200
Accessories	90–200
Armor	100–120
Security/Communication Devices	90–110
Survival Gear	100–150
Electronics	100–150
Cyberware	80–200
Magical Equipment	100–180
Vehicles	60–100

RUNNING IN BOSTON

The following section provides adventure sources, employers and opponents; elements that gamemasters can use to provide local color for runs set in Boston; and sample adventure ideas that incorporate some of the sources of conflict and major actors described in previous sections.

ADVENTURE SOURCES, EMPLOYERS AND OPPONENTS

The Boston metroplex setting provides a variety of adventure sources, employers and opponents for campaigns.

For example, the presence of the East Coast Stock Exchange ensures that plenty of high-ranking megacorporate executives are in town at any given time, which provides plenty of opportunities for shadowruns. Additionally, all the local megacorps maintain think tanks and cutting-edge research-and-development programs affiliated with nearby Harvard University and MIT&T—programs that generate potentially valuable new technology and products.

Boston's local "magical industry"—the Dunkelzahn Institute of Magical Research, MIT&T, the witches of Salem and the Warpath—also provides plenty of material for the type of magic-themed campaign described in the **Shadowrun Companion** (p. 119). Potential adventure hooks include conflicts between the magic schools, various magical groups, and individual magicians; new magical theories and/or spell formulae created by students and researchers at the DIMR or MIT&T; and magical artifacts, archeological finds or magical creatures and spirits in the area.

And don't forget Boston's social and political unrest. The city's policlubs, terrorist groups (such as the Knights of the Red Branch), and ecological activists are always hatching plots, and runners can become involved as allies or opponents of any of these groups.

Boston also offers all of the usual megacorporate and law-enforcement antagonists for runners, as well as some unique opponents such as the spellcasters of Salem, the tribes of the Rox and the inhabitants of the Catacombs.

LOCAL COLOR

Boston is a crowded city, and the plots of its paranoid power-brokers routinely overlap and conflict. Therefore, shadowruns set in the Hub tend to create more waves and have more lasting effects than those set elsewhere. For example, the operations of a group of shadowrunners that might draw little attention in Seattle will set off plenty of different "alarms" in Boston. The resulting need for discretion and stealth is particularly important in shadowruns in the corporate-controlled enclaves along Route 128 or the downtown area of the city. The Rox and the Catacombs are the only lawless sections of Boston; the rest of the metroplex is much like the better areas of Seattle, so characters must use some tact to get things done.

Incorporating the following elements in adventures and locale descriptions will also help the create the unique character of Boston and give players a sense of place.

East Coast Stock Exchange (ECSE)

Boston revolves around the ECSE and the corporate business that it attracts like a satellite orbiting the sun. Remind player characters of the ECSE's formidable presence by peppering Boston-based adventures with brokers commuting to and from the exchange, downtown marquees and data-terminals displaying stock readouts, and reports from the Stock Market Channel on the trid.

Eurostyle

Emphasize Boston's European flavor in different ways. The tendency of many of the area's magicians toward European traditions of magic, and the popular trend in European fashions, entertainment and food are all ways to illustrate the sophisticated Eurostyle of the city.

The Catacombs

The Catacombs, with their crumbling subway stations and sewer tunnels, are one of the most intriguing locales in Boston. Use the Catacombs as a location in adventures and draw the characters into the thriving subculture beneath the metroplex.

Irish Eyes

Boston's Irish community is the largest ethnic group in the city's diverse population. Currently, Boston's Irish are divided by the issue of Tír na nÓg, which has led to the Troubles and anti-elf sentiment in South Boston. Gamemasters can reflect this situation in games by including incidents of anti-elf crime, anti-elf graffiti and clashes between the rival political factions.

Additionally, gamemasters can incorporate Irish slang in Boston adventures. Numerous Irish slang words, such as *gallowglass* (a common term for a warrior, especially a cybered one), have crept into the language of the metroplex, and other slang terms can be found in **Tír na nÓg** (pp. 162–163).

Elves

The anti-elf sentiments among Boston's Irish can make certain areas of the city dangerous for elves. (On the other hand, elven families comprise a fair percentage of the affluent residents of Beacon Hill, as well as some of the Irish families that left Ireland generations ago—such as the city's Mafia head, Conor O'Rilley.) In any case, prejudice and distrust directed against elven player characters can make an interesting turnabout for the metahumans who are normally the most popular among humans.

Landmarks

Boston is a city filled with history, and campaigns in Boston can allow characters to see such famous sites as the Old North Church, the U.S.S. *Constitution*, the pier where the Boston Tea Party took place, the ivy-covered buildings of Harvard, the homes of Colonial-era patriots and other elements of Americana. Such sites make good backdrops for different scenes and encounters in an adventure and help give players a feel for the area.

Boston Magical Traditions

The witches of Salem follow a tradition of nature magic as described in the **Germany Sourcebook** (p. 134), following the Idols of the Great Mother, the Moon Maiden, the Wild Huntsman and the Horned God. A minority of witches in the area follow hermetic traditions, but still observe the religious rites and rituals involving the Idols.

In Boston proper, most of the magicians are either corporate spellcasters or students or faculty at one of the universities such as MIT&T—hermetic practitioners through and through.

By contrast, shamans are fairly rare in Boston, though a few urban shamans operate among the gangs and tribes in the Rox, and a scattering of wilderness shamans operate in New Hampshire and Vermont. Additionally, a few toxic shamans are rumored to live in the Rox and near the harbor area in South Boston. Voudoun also has some practitioners, particularly among some of the Rox tribes.

State of the Art

If using the SOTA rules from the **Shadowrun Companion** (pp. 85–87), keep in mind that Boston is an important center of both magical and Matrix research and development. This means that the SOTA in both fields may advance quite suddenly in Boston, leaving the player characters in the dust if they aren't paying attention. ("What? You're still setting your wards *that* way? We've been using the new Fortman-Keller technique for months now!")

Besides underscoring the advanced magical and technical research and development going on in Boston, sudden SOTA increases also provide a convenient means of relieving characters of extra nuyen or Karma.

SAMPLE ADVENTURE IDEAS

The following adventure ideas represent just a few of the possibilities for a Boston-based campaign.

Bloody Spirits

For nearly a month, people have been reporting ghosts near the sites of the Bloody Thursday riots in Southie. A DIMR researcher wants to investigate the sites and the ghosts, and he needs to bring along some bodyguards.

Unfortunately for the researcher and the runners, the ghosts are actually magical illusions cast by a shaman working for the Warpath terrorist organization. The illusions are intended to frighten people away from a gun-smuggling operation in the area. If the runners and the researcher make their way past the harmless specters, they run right into the middle of an arms-deal negotiation between members of Warpath and the Boston Mafia. None of the parties will appreciate being interrupted by characters carrying a lot of scanning and photographic equipment, and the negotiators will want to make sure that the intruders don't tell anyone about what they've seen.

Just when things look like they're about to turn violent, a harmless (but loud) phantom explosion blasts a nearby building and *real* ghosts appear. These specters of the riots have been disturbed by the magical activity in the area and the researcher's poking and prodding, and they attack everyone present, causing general chaos and confusion. The specters (p. 224, **SR II**) have psychokinetic abilities, which they use to great effect (between the runners and the negotiators, the immediate vicinity is filled with weapons just waiting to go off).

If the runners are quick, they can get their employer and themselves out intact, but they won't necessarily make many friends with the Mafia or Warpath.

Rate of Exchange

The runners are contacted by a fixer or Mr. Johnson and hired to steal confidential account information from a broker named Tom Meadows, who works at the ECSE. Meadows lives in an exclusive Beacon Hill apartment complex, complete with a state-of-the-art security system and regular Knight Errant patrols. Unknown to the runners, their employer is a representative of Richard Villiers' interests in Boston and the information is intended to allow Villiers to expand his personal corporate empire. Additionally, the runners and their employer have no inkling that Meadows has been supplying inside stock information to a local oyabun for months, and that Meadows's personal bodyguards have been supplied by the Yakuza.

The runners manage to defeat the Yakuza bodyguards and steal the account information, but before they can pass the information to their employer, they come under attack from a series of Yakuza hit teams.

If the runners survive the attacks, get to Villiers's representative and spill information on Meadows's involvement with the Yakuza, they can get some help in getting the gumi off their backs. Villiers may also hire them to investigate any ties between the Yakuza and the Japanese factions of Fuchi and perform other runs for him as well.

Salvage

A corp exec and his wife hire the runners to investigate the disappearance of their daughter, a college student named Jennifer Tynes. Tynes is one of six men and women who have disappeared while riding night-time "T" trains during the past few weeks. (The local authorities have attributed the disappearances to random street violence.)

An MIT&T magic-program student, Tynes vanished two nights ago while returning to her dorm from a show at a Back Bay club. Once the runners start digging, they soon learn that Tynes had no motivation to run away, and they learn that all six of the men and women who disappeared were magically active in some way.

The runners' investigation takes them into the depths of the Catacombs, where they find that people are very reluctant to talk about the disappearances. Everyone in the underground community tries to mind their own business and contacts are surprisingly close-mouthed. After a few dead ends, some of Mama's Boys contact the runners. They tell the runners that Mama wants to meet with them, and take them to an abandoned subway station deep in the Catacombs. The crone fixer tells the runners that she knows where Jennifer Tynes can be found and offers to give the information to them in exchange for a future favor. She says she is only willing to speak because Tynes is important in some way, but she refuses to elaborate.

If the runners agree, Mama directs them to a ruined warehouse in the Rox. The warehouse has been converted into a chop-shop by Tamanous organleggers (see pp. 25–26, **Underworld Sourcebook**). The Tamanous are not behind the disappearances, however. The kidnapper is a crazed toxic Shark shaman named Mako, who lives on the top floor of the warehouse. Mako believes that the blood of the magically gifted ("the salt of the inner sea") can be used in a ritual to cleanse the toxins from the waters of

Boston Harbor. Tamanous takes the remains of the shaman's sacrifices and uses them for spare parts after Mako is finished. The Shark shaman plans to sacrifice Jennifer Tynes at midnight, unless the runners can get into the warehouse and rescue her. To do that, they must defeat the organleggers and their ghoul allies, as well as Mako's toxic spirits.

RUNNING IN DETROIT

The following section describes elements that gamemasters can use to provide local color for runs set in Detroit, as well as sample adventure ideas that incorporate some of the sources of conflict and major actors described in **Opportunities** (p. 64) and **Who's Who.**

LOCAL COLOR

Use the following elements in adventures to help give players a feel for the unique flavor of Motor City.

"Aresville"

Detroit is Ares's home town, and most everyone in Detroit *loves* Ares. Everywhere they turn, players should run into Ares-made products, Ares advertisements, Ares trideo programming, and the Ares logo on baseball caps, jackets, overalls and so on. Make the players feel surrounded and outnumbered by Ares-lovers.

Cars

Detroiters love their cars, so player characters should see a lot of automobiles on the streets. And of course, almost all of those cars should be Fords and GMs. Any player character who drives a foreign car is likely to hear some snide remarks directed his way, and he may wake up one morning to find that his car's windows have been smashed. Civic-minded gangers might even toss a firebomb at his wheels as he drives down the highway.

People Mover

Use the downtown People Mover to get player characters around. The subway also makes an excellent setting for a fight, chase or confrontation with a crazed political or ecological terrorist who may or may not have anything to do with the characters' current mission.

Refugees

Detroit contains large numbers of Chicago refugees, and locals' opinions about them range from sympathy to violent paranoia. Occasionally, make the player characters aware of the division between local Detroiters and the refugees, who are treated as "different" in both subtle and overt ways.

Pick A Side

Remember that Detroiters tend to use "East Side" and "West Side" to talk about where something is in the city, directions that might be confusing to characters who aren't familiar with Detroit.

Landmarks

Use the major locations described in the **What's Where** section as settings or backdrops for different scenes in a Detroit adventure. The characters might have a meet at a trendy ethnic restaurant in Greektown, take the People Mover to the Theatre District and talk with a contact at the Opera House, or meet someone at one of the sports arenas. Knight Plaza is a must for player characters to at least see, if not visit, and a meeting with Knight or Aurelius in their offices in the Ares world headquarters building should be enough to make any shadowrunner feel small.

Underworld

Emphasize the differences between the Detroit and Seattle underworld (or between the Detroit underworld and that of the group's regular campaign city). The Mafia is largely unchallenged in Detroit, but even they have to tread carefully under the watch-

ful eye of Knight Errant. The Yakuza is virtually non-existent because of rampant anti-Japanese sentiment in the metroplex, and the Seoulpa Rings and Triads are not major forces as they are in Seattle. Gangs roam the Blight and other areas of the metroplex, but these gangs are different in style from Seattle gangs. For example, drag-racer gangs are much more prevalent than go-gangs.

SAMPLE ADVENTURE IDEAS

The following adventure ideas represent just a few of the possibilities for a Detroit-based **Shadowrun** campaign.

Double Agents

An Ares research and development team working under Leonard Aurelius is on the verge of perfecting a new rigger-control system that will revolutionize the industry. Secrecy about the project is extremely tight, but Damien Knight's network of informants has managed to learn about the impending breakthrough and informed their boss. Knight is happy about the breakthrough because it will increase Ares's share of a lucrative market. However, he does not want Aurelius to receive any credit for it.

Knight hatches a plan to steal his rival's thunder and embarrass him at the same time. Through his underlings, he hires the runners to break into the research team's lab the night before the control system's scheduled demonstration, steal the prototype, replace it with a defective one and hand off the genuine prototype to Knight's own research team.

The run starts smoothly enough, and the team manages to get into the lab. But before they can leave with the prototype, security personnel working for Aurelius emerge from hidden positions and trap the runners. The leader of the team informs them that Mr. Aurelius has learned all about Mr. Knight's little plan. He gives them a choice. They can either give Knight a second fake prototype, or they can die. No matter what they decide, one of Ares's two head honchos is going to be very unhappy with them.

Enemies Within, Enemies Without

Raoul Gottschalk, a super-genius Matrix designer, has recently defected from Mitsuhama and gone to work for Ares. Mitsuhama desperately wants to get him back. If that's not possible, Mitsuhama wants the designer dead—he's much too valuable a resource to let Ares have him. The player characters enter the picture when they are hired to supplement the Ares security teams that are providing Gottschalk with twenty-four-hour protection.

The job seems straightforward enough—sit around and wait for Mitsuhama's extraction and assassination attempts against Gottschalk. Not exactly a cakewalk, but with the help of the Ares security personnel the runners should have no problem. But there's one catch—some of those security personnel may not prove so helpful. Unknown to the runners, not everyone at Ares is happy about Gottschalk's arrival. In fact, some people—such as Frank Stein—are very unhappy about it. Stein is the corporate mentor of Laura O'Toole, who was Ares's star Matrix designer until Gottschalk arrived. Having Ms. O'Toole in his pocket was quite a feather in Stein's cap, but his reputation has lost a bit of luster now that O'Toole is no longer Ares's reigning Matrix goddess. To make matters worse, Gottschalk was recruited by Luigi Sakamoto, one of Stein's rivals at Ares.

Understandably, Stein wouldn't mind seeing Gottschalk out of the picture. The designer's disappearance or demise would discredit Sakamoto and help Stein's own reputation. So Stein has carefully arranged Gottschalk's death. He has already paid off certain members of Gottschalk's security detail. When the time is right, they are going to make Gottschalk "disappear" and blame it on the player characters, telling everyone that the runners are actually a secret extraction team hired by Mitsuhama. Of course, if everything goes according to plan, the runners will never have a chance to clear their names because they will conveniently "disappear" along with Gottschalk.

The Big Gamble

In an effort to impress the Commissione, Don Leo McCaskill of Milwaukee is splashing some nuyen around to folks who aren't too choosy about their employers. The Don has put "Eggs" Milwaukee in charge of disrupting operations at the casino controlled by rival Don Roland "The Greek" Stephanopoulos, hoping that his machinations will prove to the Commissione that he should be in charge of the Mafia in the Midwest and Chicago. Trouble is, "The Greek" has the same idea. Player characters may be hired by one side or the other, or both sides (for a truly fiendish adventure).

Motor City Madmen

Leonard Aurelius is paranoid about the one potential chink in his armor: his family, especially his wild daughter Evelynn. The lead guitar player with the Detroit band The Unholy Machine, Evelynn hates it when her father sends security goons to watch over her, and she often goes out of her way to ditch her own protection. So Leonard has been searching the shadows for someone to get close to Evelynn and watch her without letting her know that daddy sent them. As "Eve Night," Evelynn lives the lifestyle of a rock-and-roller. She is presently dating Two-Chord Teddy, a member of the Detroit Nightmares, so she spends a lot of time out in the Oakland County area watching the Nightmares practice destroying things.

This adventure is an opportunity to let the runners see some new Ares prototypes being demonstrated, as well as keeping up with a local music personality and an Urban Brawl team.

Run for the Border

Damien Knight has recently become obsessed with the closed border between the UCAS and Québec, and the consequent lack of access to facilities owned by Cross Applied Technologies. Knight's personal vendetta against Cross leads him to take every opportunity to disrupt life for the Canadian corporation, directly or indirectly. In this particular adventure, he hires some runners to make contact with the Québec Unité political fringe group and run guns and gear to them. The runners will most likely come across the First Canadians militia, as well as having run-ins with the Mafia who control most of the docks and various "secrets" in the city of Windsor.

RUNNING IN CHICAGO

The events described in the **Bug City** sourcebook turned the Chicago sprawl upside down almost overnight. In the two years since then, life inside the Chicago Containment Zone has changed little except to get harsher, darker and colder—until now.

Chicago—Oblivion's End? offers a resolution to the Chicago crisis that rearranges the playing field for campaigns set in Chicago. Keep in mind that **Chicago—Oblivion's End?** is not meant to be a comprehensive guide to places and people in the Chicago sprawl. Instead, the events described in that section change the options for gamemasters and players using Chicago and the Containment Zone as locations for adventures and campaigns. In many respects, the Chicago described in **Chicago—Oblivion's End?** remains the hell-on-earth previously described in **Bug City.** The material in **Target: UCAS** does not make **Bug City** obsolete. As with any **Shadowrun** sourcebook, each gamemaster may pick and choose the events that determine the direction of his or her game.

STRAIN-III RULES

The release of the Strain-III Beta bacteria into the Containment Zone caused a number of unexpected developments that have created a unique magical environment in the Chicago area. Ares expected the bacteria to drain the insect spirits of magical energy, go dormant, and die of starvation within a few days. Instead it has remained alive and active, happily feeding off the magical energy provided by the Containment Zone's background count. Operation Extermination has left Chicago with an interesting and sometimes dangerous legacy.

Strain-III is an astral bacteria that latches on to an astrally active host and begins draining magical energy from the host to feed itself. When it reaches a critical energy level and drains its host, the Strain-III will reproduce. At that point the bacteria will move on to a new host, starting the cycle all over again. The bacteria does not live long without food, however. If it goes long enough without consuming energy, it will lose strength and eventually die.

Originally, researchers believed that Strain-III was man-made—a wild offshoot of an attempt to reverse-engineer BacteriTech's FAT Bacteria Strain I (from which Strain-III derived its name). Further research, however, has cast doubt on this theory. Many people in the field have come to realize that Strain-III is a naturally occurring entity instinctively drawn to areas of high magical activity, such as the corporate research facility where it first turned up. The bacteria is completely astral; it has no physical form or ability to manifest, and no effect on non-astral objects.

The original rules for Strain-III can be found on page 104 of the **Threats** sourcebook. This section replaces some of those rules and gives supplemental rules for the Beta strain released into the Containment Zone.

Strain-III Clouds

A single Strain-III bacterium is not powerful enough to affect anything; it takes an entire colony of them to have any noticeable effect. Instead of dealing with a thousand microscopic entities individually, Strain-III is always handled as *clouds*. Each cloud has an overall rating based on the amount of magical energy it has

TIMELINE

The following rough timeline sketches out the progress of events from **Bug City** to **Chicago—Oblivion's End?.**

August 2055

As the magic level in the Awakened world begins to rise, strange creatures start appearing. Dubbed "insect spirits" by the magical community, their motives and methods remain a mystery. After months of gathering information, authorities at Ares Macrotechnology learn that the city of Chicago is home to a major insect-spirit hive, possibly the biggest hive in North America. A botched Knight Errant raid on the hive causes the bug spirits to erupt and flood the city. In a second assault, later dubbed the Cermak Blast, Ares forces detonate a subtactical nuclear weapon inside the main hive. Though the effects of the Cermak Blast were mysteriously contained to the immediate vicinity of the hive, the Awakened insect spirits terrorize the rest of Chicago.

Unable to deal with the sudden infestation of insect spirits, the UCAS government tries to keep a lid on the situation. Under the pretense of controlling a new outbreak of the VITAS plague, the government walls off and quarantines part of Chicago, dubbing it the "Containment Zone." Knight Errant troops, along with token numbers of the UCAS Army and National Guard, keep watch over the CZ Wall.

2057

Two years later, the CZ remains essentially unchanged. Attention in the UCAS is focused on the upcoming elections, and the Chicago issue has become the center of political debate as presidential candidates point fingers and pontificate on what must be done. After the election and subsequent assassination of President Dunkelzahn, the UCAS government finds it has bigger problems to deal with than changing the status quo in Bug City. The standoff in Chicago continues.

February 2058

After months of research, scientists working for Ares Macrotechnology "perfect" a new batch of Strain-III bacteria, dubbed Strain-III Beta. Without so much as a word to President Haeffner, Damien Knight gives the go-ahead for Operation Extermination—the wholesale release of the Strain-III Beta bacteria into the Containment Zone to wipe out the bugs. On the 22nd of February, Knight Errant security saturates the CZ with the new bacteria and then clears out many of the insect hives in the city.

Declaring the need for the CZ ended, Ares withdraws its troops from the blockade around Chicago. President Haeffner has little choice but to formally end the quarantine. Massive numbers of refugees flee the CZ, causing a panic in neighboring areas of Chicago who fear the refugees are bringing bug spirits with them. Various authorities manage to quell the riots, and an uneasy peace falls between those outside the CZ and those inside. In practice if not on paper, Chicago remains as isolated as ever from the rest of the UCAS.

consumed. The rating will increase as the cloud feeds until it reaches a critical level, at which point the cloud will use the extra energy to reproduce.

A Strain-III cloud covers a spherical area with a radius roughly equal to its rating. At any given time, the exact area may be larger or smaller as the bacteria moves around astral space and feeds. When a cloud attaches itself to a target, it usually contracts into a smaller volume so that all of the bacteria in the cloud can be closer to the food source.

Depending on its rating, a cloud of Strain-III is *active*, *dormant* or *mature*. Any active or dormant cloud can attach itself to a host and drain it. Dormant clouds (Ratings 1–5) tend to remain stationary; active clouds (Ratings 6–9) roam freely through astral space in search of food. A mature cloud is an active or dormant cloud that has absorbed enough energy to reproduce. These clouds have Ratings of 10 or higher. They feed at double an active cloud's rate (see **Feeding** and **Energy Drain**, below and p. 95). They automatically reproduce once they have consumed all available energy from a given food source.

Strain-III exists only in astral space, and so abides by the same movement and line-of-sight rules that limit projecting magicians. It cannot travel or see through living earth, people, rooms sealed with FAT-bacteria and so on. Keep in mind that, even though inanimate objects do not block astral movement, they do block line of sight.

Strain-III also moves very slowly. Dormant clouds have an effective Quickness of 1, and will not move unless a food source comes within view (see **Feeding,** below). Active clouds move at a slightly higher speed; they have an effective Quickness of 2 and drift through astral space of their own volition. Neither type of cloud can use the "fast movement" option available to projecting magicians (p. 146, **SRII**). Because the bacteria is so slow, magicians can outrun a cloud or skirt around areas of high Strain-III concentration if they know what to watch out for.

It is difficult to spot Strain-III on the astral plane. To see a cloud of it, a magician, spirit or critter must make a successful Perception Test with a base target number equal to 12 minus the cloud's rating. Normal astral line-of-sight rules apply. Of course, even if the magician spots the bacteria cloud, he or she may not realize what he's looking at. Unless the magician has dealt with Strain-III before, the gamemaster may call for a Magic Theory (6) Test to determine if the magician recognizes the bacteria. A failed roll means that the character is clueless or that he mistakes the bacteria cloud for a localized background count.

A cloud of Strain-III will move toward any astrally active object within the line of sight of *any portion* of the cloud. (In some odd cases, two halves of a cloud might be on opposite sides of a wall, meaning that the cloud can "see" a target on *either* side of the wall.) A cloud can see for a number of meters equal to twice its rating.

> *Scarecrow is on one side of a wall, and a Rating 5 Strain-III cloud is on the other. Because the wall blocks line of sight in astral space, the bacteria will not suddenly come through the wall and attach itself to Scarecrow, even though the wall is inanimate and so would not hinder its movement. However, if Scarecrow suddenly pokes his astral head through the wall to see what's on the other side, some Strain-III will attach itself to him at that point. The cloud will then follow him as he retreats to the other side of the wall.*

A magician masking his aura may be able to fool the cloud into thinking he is not a food source. To determine the success of this tactic, the gamemaster rolls a number of dice equal to the rating of the cloud in an attempt to pierce the mask (see p. 46, **Grimoire II**). If the cloud is successful, it sees through the masking. However, if the magician actually comes into astral contact with the cloud, no amount of masking will fool the Strain-III.

Feeding

Strain-III survives by feeding on magical energy. Foci, spell locks, spells, dual-natured animals, and even mages and shamans are possible food sources. So is a background count, as Ares discovered the hard way. As the bacteria drains energy from its target, it increases its own strength, which allows it to drain the host even faster. This vicious cycle is one of the things that makes Strain-III so dangerous.

Before Strain-III can attach itself to a host, the host must be in contact with some portion of the cloud and must be astrally active. Dual-natured creatures (noted in various **Shadowrun** sourcebooks by brackets around the creature's Essence Rating), nature spirits, elementals, watcher spirits and cyberzombies are always astrally active, and therefore always fair game for Strain-III. Foci and spell locks are only valid targets if they are activated, and magicians only if they are astrally perceiving or projecting. As soon as a magician ceases perceiving or the focus is deactivated, Strain-III can no longer drain the target and will likely move on in search of other food.

Strain-III clouds do not attach to potential hosts automatically. The cloud must make a Feeding Test, using a number of dice equal to its rating against a target number equal to the target's effective Force rating (or its equivalent) *plus* the total rating of any Strain-III cloud already feeding on the target. A creature uses its Essence as an effective Force rating, a magician uses his Magic Rating unaugmented by foci, and cyberzombies use the absolute value of their Essence (i.e., a cyborg with Essence –3 has an effective Force rating of 3). The bacteria needs only 1 success to attach itself to its target.

Multiple clouds can combine to drain a single target, but each new cloud will have more difficulty attaching itself. All Strain-III attached to one target is treated as a single cloud with a single rating. As more Strain-III comes along and begins feeding, it adds its rating to that of the bacteria already present, up to a maximum Rating of 10. If the addition of a new cloud would raise the total rating above 10, the new cloud may *not* attach itself to the target, and must search for some other source of food.

If multiple targets are within sight of a cloud, the Strain-III will head toward the most powerful target first. Strain-III does not distinguish between the different types of targets. It finds a Force 6 power focus just as appetizing as a magician with a Magic Rating of 6. When counting active food sources for Strain-III, consider

each magically active item a separate target for the cloud; for example, an astrally perceiving mage with an active foci presents two targets rather than one. In the case of a power focus, which boosts the character's Magic Rating, the two targets are the effective foci rating and the character's unaugmented Magic Rating.

If the Strain-III cloud cannot attach itself to the most powerful target, it might move on to a weaker but more convenient source of food. To reduce the total number of die rolls required when multiple targets are present, the gamemaster rolls the Strain-III's Feeding Test once and compares the result to every valid target. The cloud will attach itself to the most powerful entity that the roll permits.

Wraith (Magic Rating 7), Scarecrow (unaugmented Magic Rating 5) and Scarecrow's Rating 3 power focus are all within the line-of-sight of a Rating 6 Strain-III cloud. All three entities are astrally active—Wraith and Scarecrow are perceiving or projecting and the power focus is activated. The gamemaster rolls six dice (for the cloud's Rating of 6), and gets the following results: 5, 5, 4, 2, 2 and 1. The cloud achieved no successes against the target number for Wraith (his Magic Rating of 7), and so it cannot attach itself to him even though he is the most powerful entity in the area.

However, the cloud did achieve successes against the target numbers for Scarecrow (his unaugmented Magic Rating of 5) and the power focus (its Rating of 3). Because Scarecrow is the more powerful of those two food sources, the bacteria will attach itself to him. Note that even though Scarecrow's effective Magic Rating is 8 (5 + 3), the bacteria cloud sees Scarecrow and his power focus as two distinct entities.

Energy Drain

Once a cloud successfully attaches to a host, it begins to drain the host's magical energy—slowly at first, but with increasing speed as the target weakens and the cloud grows in strength. The rate of drain depends on the rating of the Strain-III cloud attached to the target, as shown on the table below. Note that the original, "natural" Strain-III (p. 103, **Threats**) has a much slower drain rate than the Beta version released in the Chicago Containment Zone.

The Force/Feeding Table shows the base time for the cloud to drain 1 point of Force from the target. The gamemaster can reduce the base time by making a second Feeding Test and dividing the base time by the number of successes rolled. If no successes are rolled, the cloud feeds at the standard rate.

FORCE/FEEDING TABLE

Category	Rating	Feeding Rate (Normal)	Feeding Rate (Beta)
Dormant	1–5	36 hours	18 hours
Active	6–9	24 hours	12 hours
Mature	10+	12 hours	6 hours

Each Force point drained from the target is added to the rating of the Strain-III cloud feeding on the target. When the cloud's Rating reaches 10, it has achieved a critical level and will reproduce by splitting into new clouds—usually two, though it can split into more. The rating of all the new clouds equals that of the entire cloud before it split, and so a Rating 10 Strain-III cloud may break off in any combination of clouds whose ratings add up to 10. One part of a split cloud will always be active and one will always be dormant. The active cloud or clouds will float off looking for another host. The dormant cloud or clouds will wait for a new host to appear within line of sight. Remember that two clouds cannot attach to the same host if the clouds' combined ratings exceed 10.

While afflicted by the bacteria, all living creatures will begin to show flu-like symptoms. As the host continues to lose magical energy, it grows weaker and sicker. In game terms, the host's rating goes down permanently. A Force 6 power focus that loses a point of Force to the Strain-III cloud becomes a Force 5 focus. This lost power cannot be regained, nor can losses of Magic Rating or Essence be healed. This effect is particularly important for magicians and creatures. A magician who loses a Magic Rating point to the bacteria has lost it forever. He can only increase his Magic Rating by increasing his grade of initiation, per standard rules. When a host's effective Force rating drops to 0, the host is completely drained. If the host is a spell, it is disrupted. If a focus, spell lock or other magic item, it is rendered useless. If a spirit, paranormal critter or magician, it dies.

Cyberzombies are a special case. They are astrally active, so the bacteria can attach to them as normal. However, as cyberzombies do not have any magical energy, the bacteria cannot actually drain them. This makes them perfect carriers for Strain-III, which will remain attached to a cyberzombie until a more appealing target (one that the cloud can actually use for food) comes along. See **Carriers**, p. 96.

Disinfecting Hosts

A character or object infected by Strain-III can be disinfected in various ways before being killed or rendered inert. The first and easiest way is to deactivate the target. A magician can stop projecting or perceiving, deactivate the active focus or spell lock, stop sustaining the spell, and so on. Dual-natured critters and spirits (including elementals, nature spirits and watchers) are out of luck, however, as they cannot cease being active.

Strain-III does not seem to exist on the metaplanes—so far, none of it has been found there. A spirit can therefore disinfect itself by returning to its home metaplane, and a projecting magician can rid himself of the bacteria by going on a little astral quest (see p. 93, **Grimoire II**). However, it is usually much easier for the magician to simply return to his body.

A magician may also attempt to use a Cure Disease (Deadly) spell on an infected host, with a target number equal to the rating of the cloud plus any background count modifier. Every 2 successes rolled reduce the cloud's rating by 1 point. When the rating drops to 0, the cloud is destroyed and the host is no longer infected. If the host is a living entity, however, it will continue to

be physically ill for a time while it recovers from the physical symptoms induced by the bacteria. The exact effects are up to the gamemaster, but in general the character will feel like he has the flu. The effects are similar to a Moderate stun wound; they should last for about a week, give or take a few days depending on the target character's Body attribute.

The Sterilize spell may also be used on an area containing Strain-III. The base target number is 4, plus the rating of the most powerful cloud in the area, plus the background count (if any). Every 2 successes rolled reduce the rating of all clouds in the area by 1 point. Keep in mind that, because Strain-III has no physical component, a magician must be astrally perceiving or projecting in order to target it with a spell—which means the magician may become a target himself.

Attempting to disinfect a target or an area with a spell has one nasty side effect. The bacteria feeds on the energy of the spell, which makes subsequent attempts to get rid of it more and more difficult. To reflect this, every time a magician casts a spell on a bacteria cloud, modify the base target number of the *next* attempt by +1. Waiting 24 hours between attempts will eliminate this effect and set the target number back to normal.

> *Ryland, the ever-cocky Texan, has decided he wants to clean some Strain-III out a room, so he hops in there astrally. Unfortunately for him, he underestimated the bacteria's strength; he's facing a Rating 8 cloud of Strain-III. He tries his Sterilize spell at Force 6, and rolls against a target number of 12 (4 + 8=12). Surprisingly, Ryland manages to get 2 successes, enough to bring the cloud's Rating down to 7. At this point, the cloud decides that Ryland would make a nice snack, and attaches itself to him. It tags along as Ryland returns to his meat body, but loses its connection to him once he ceases to be astrally active.*

Probably the most reliable way of ridding a host of the bacteria is to tempt it with a juicier target. If a new host appears that has a Force rating 3 or more points higher than the one to which the cloud is currently attached, the cloud will leave the first host and go after the new one. The bacteria must make a standard Feeding Test to attach to the new host. If the test fails, the cloud will head back toward the weaker source, but must make a second Feeding Test to reattach.

If the first host (the weaker one) has a Quickness Rating more than double the Quickness of the cloud, it can remove itself from the cloud's vicinity or attention. The gamemaster determines what the astral area around the host and cloud is like, including whether line of sight or other barriers apply.

Whenever Strain-III has no host to feed on and is not sustained by a background count (see below), it begins to starve. The bacteria can survive for a number of weeks equal to its rating, but after that time it loses 1 rating point *per week* until its rating falls to 0 and dies.

Carriers

As with any bacteria, Strain-III can be transmitted from place to place via its host. Any astrally active object or being may act as a carrier for Strain-III without necessarily being drained by it. Devil rats and cockroach spirits have adapted quickly to the bacteria and developed a certain immunity, which makes them ideal carriers. Strain-III drains these creatures at half the normal rate. Metahuman magicians infected by the bacteria who then cease perceiving or projecting have been known to drag the Strain-III along with them; it tends to hover near them for awhile, hoping the food source will return. While instances of the bacteria being carried outside the CZ are not common, they are not unheard-of.

Strain-III and Background Counts

A cloud of Strain-III cannot increase its rating by feeding off a background count, but it can maintain itself at a rating equal to the background count. For example, a Rating 2 cloud of Strain-III can survive indefinitely in a region with a Level 2 background count. Because the entire Containment Zone has a background count of at least Level 1 (see **Background Count,** p. 97), Strain-III clouds are scattered all over central Chicago, just waiting for some unfortunate magician or spirit to wander by. Temporary background counts, like those caused by repeated spellcasting or strong but short-lived emotions (a rock concert, for example), cannot sustain the bacteria for long because the energy fades too quickly.

The high background count in the Containment Zone has kept most of the Strain-III in the area. Infected hosts have taken the bacteria out the Containment Zone, but infrequently. The unexpected survival of the bacteria has had one benefit: the clouds inside the Containment Zone pretty much stay where they are, happily feeding off the background count. They have no reason to spread outside Chicago, and the unusual nature of background-count energy prevents the virus from gaining in strength. This has kept the Strain-III Beta problem isolated in the CZ and its immediate surroundings.

Using Strain-III

The biggest obstacle for a gamemaster is incorporating Strain-III into a campaign without disrupting the flow of the game. The rules provided in this section are extremely detailed; if the gamemaster applies them every single time a magician comes near a Strain-III cloud, the game will bog down rapidly. To prevent this, keep the following guidelines in mind. Strain-III clouds are all over the CZ, but characters are most likely to encounter them in areas with high background counts. Make occasional random dice rolls to see if a cloud has infected a character or magical item, and only go into great detail about where the clouds are and what effects they have in special situations. Don't let the rules for Strain-III become the focus of the campaign. Instead, it should be a nagging dread in the back of the players' minds, especially when they consider using things like quickened spells, ally spirits, spell locks and so on. You can use it to keep the magician characters in the group from throwing off the balance of the game, because they will be less eager to use their magical abilities at every opportunity. However, keep in mind that Strain-III really isn't all that threat-

ening to a magician player-character. He or she is unlikely to be exposed to it for long enough to be permanently incapacitated or killed. The greater danger is psychological, as magicians and spirits come to terms with the fact that they are not the dominant astral force they thought they were.

BACKGROUND COUNT

Even after Operation Extermination, Chicago has a lingering Background Count of 1. Any insect hives or other centers of magical activity should have Background Counts of 2 or 3. The area around the Shattergraves has a Background Count of 4. The only location with a higher Background Count is the Cermak Blast site. At the center of the blast and for a radius of 100 meters, the Background Count is 7. The count drops to 6 for the next 200 meters, and to 5 for another 1,000 meters. Further away from the blast site the background count continues to diminish until finally it drops to the normal count for the rest of the CZ. The only area in the Containment Zone devoid of background count is the Sanctum, used by Jason Two-Spirits and his followers.

For more detailed information about the effect of background counts, particularly in the area of the Cermak Blast, see page 145 of the **Bug City** sourcebook.

VOIDS

When Ares released the Strain-III bacteria and it began to feed off the Containment Zone's background count, areas of astral space within the Zone began to change in strange ways ... as if the astral fabric had become weaker. In some sections of the Zone, magic simply didn't seem to work any more. Local magicians called these areas Voids.

Voids fade in and out of existence. A section of astral space that had a background count last week might be a Void today. A week later, the background count may return. The Voids appear to have no logic or pattern; they appear and disappear at apparently random times and places.

In all other respects, treat Voids as negative background counts. They have levels on the same scale as background counts, which reflect how much astral energy in a given area has been drained. Conjuring, spellcasting and other activities are just as difficult in a Void as they would be in a background count of the same level. The only difference is that the effects of background counts stem from an excess of astral energy, while the effects of a Void stem from the lack of that same energy.

Locations of Voids

There is no obvious pattern to the Voids in the CZ, so gamemasters may throw them at the players wherever and whenever it seems appropriate. If you want a degree of randomness in your game, roll 2D6 and consult the Random Void/Background Count Levels table to determine the Void or background count level of a given area. A Void can have a higher level than a nearby background count, though this rarely happens. For special areas that already have a designated background count, such as the Cermak Blast site, use that level for Voids in the area rather than making a random dice roll.

RANDOM VOID/BACKGROUND COUNT LEVELS

2D6 Roll	Level
2	Level 3 Void
3–4	Level 2 Void
5–6	Level 1 Void
7–9	Level 1 Background Count
10–11	Level 2 Background Count
12	Level 3 Background Count

Damage from Voids

A magician who astrally perceives or projects in a Void risks physical and emotional trauma. The change in astral "pressure" from a normal area (or background count) to a Void can cause damage, similar to what befalls a deep-sea diver who rises too quickly to the surface. Any character who astrally perceives or projects in a Void may suffer this damage. Upon entering the area astrally, the character takes a (Level)L physical wound based on the level of the Void. The character may resist the damage normally. Assuming he stays active and in the Void, he must resist the damage again after a number of turns equal to his Magic Rating. The cycle repeats until the character ceases to be astrally active or leaves the Void.

Magicians caught in a Void for extended periods of time tend to return a few cards short of a full deck. For every hour spent astrally active in a Void, the magician loses 1 point of Intelligence as well as 1 point of Essence, per standard rules for the effects of astral projection (p. 146, **SRII**). They often become silent and withdrawn, sometimes even clinically depressed. In extreme cases, the shock of entering a Void has been known to kill. These effects are similar, but not identical, to those experienced by magicians who wander into the foveae of Aztlan or who travel beyond the atmosphere into outer space. Essence lost in a Void returns at a rate of 1 point per minute once the character has left the Void; Intelligence returns at the rate of 1 point every 24 hours. Rather than having the character lose Intelligence, the gamemaster may give him or her a Mental Flaw (p. 28, **SRComp**) equal in rating to the number of hours spent in the Void.

In addition to the above effects, even the most strong-willed magicians find the lack of mana in the Voids very unsettling. Any time a character enters a Void while astrally projecting or perceiving, he must make a Willpower (4) Test. If he generates no successes, he has been traumatized by the experience. The character loses 1 point of Intelligence immediately, regardless of the amount of time he has spent in the Void. This damage is healed in 24 hours.

If an astrally projecting character's Intelligence is reduced to 0, the character's astral form is hurled back into his physical body (if astrally perceiving, the character is knocked out of astral space) and he takes a Deadly Stun wound (in either case). To recover from this damage, the character must make a Willpower Test against a target number equal to the character's unmodified, unaugmented Intelligence. Every 2 successes rolled reduces the

damage taken by one box. Only rest can heal this damage; magic won't work. The gamemaster may also give the character a Mental Flaw.

When traveling astrally through the Containment Zone, a magician should not use "fast movement" (p.146, **SRII**) unless he has a death wish. The repeated quick transitions between background counts and Voids can cause extreme physical damage and/or mental trauma. If a character is foolhardy enough to attempt such a thing, the gamemaster can lump the multiple rolls that would otherwise be required (one for each background count and Void) into a single roll, adding together the various target numbers and/or damage ratings.

Dual-natured creatures caught in a Void tend to become extremely violent. They will attack the first creature they see, even a friend. Being in the Void reduces the creature's Intelligence by the Void Level, and so the creature does not recognize anyone or anything as it normally would.

Magical Tests in Voids

Gamemasters should modify the Drain Level and target numbers of magical tests made by characters within a Void according to the Void Magical Effects table, below. The target number modifiers can be reduced by centering; see page 44, **Grimoire II.**

These modifiers apply to *all* tests involving astral space, including conjuring, spellcasting, astral perception, astral combat, quickening and anchoring. Tests made for physical activities are not affected, even if the character is magically active. The only exception to this rule is for dual-natured creatures, who are always astrally active and therefore always affected by the Void even when performing physical actions.

VOID MAGICAL EFFECTS

Target Number Modifiers
+1 to all target numbers per level of the Void

Drain
+1 to the Power of Drain per level of the Void
In addition, increase the Damage level of Drain by 1 level for every 3 Void levels

Wraith is unlucky enough to get caught in a Level 3 Void. He decides to cast his Force 6 manaball spell anyway, as he's managed to offend a group of "representatives" from the Volk and needs to do something drastic about it. The spell's normal Drain Level is 3S. The Level 3 void adds 4 to the Drain, raising it to 7 (+1 for each of the Void's three levels, and an additional +1 because the Void is Level 3 to begin with). So the spell's Drain is 7D. Even worse, Wraith must make his roll against a +3 target number when casting the spell (+1 for each of the Void's levels). Poor slot.

Using Voids

The Voids in the CZ serve as a wild card for all magical activities conducted there. Characters can never be sure exactly where or when a Void may pop up, and should feel lingering nervousness and uncertainty about using magic. However, the Voids are not meant to cripple magician characters in a group. Gamemasters should take care not to use them too often, or the Voids will lose impact and frustrate the players of magical characters. The gamemaster need not roll on the Random Void/Background Count Levels table every time the characters enter a new area; making so many dice rolls will quickly get tedious and bog down the game. Instead, the gamemaster should make rolls every once in a while to add flavor to the game and keep the players guessing.

Gamemasters who want to experiment with using Voids outside Chicago should keep the following guideline in mind. Characters can only encounter Voids outside the Containment Zone if Strain-III is combined with a background count. At the present time, Strain-III does not create its own background count (we'll have to wait for Strain-IV to do that). Finally, gamemasters may adapt the damage rules in this section to reflect what happens to an astrally perceiving or projecting character who wanders into a foveae in Aztlan, or who travels beyond the atmosphere. Though these situations are all different, they have similar effects on magician characters.

BUGS

The rules for insect spirits appear on pages 135–145 of the **Bug City** sourcebook, and also on pages 101–107 of **Grimoire II.** Additional rules provided on pages 64–69 of the **Threats** sourcebook concern the mutations the bugs have undergone since the Cermak Blast.

Strain-III Beta was intended to rid Chicago once and for all of the bug menace. Unfortunately, things didn't work out that way. If anything, since Operation Extermination the bugs' machinations have become even more subtle than those described in **Threats.** The bugs have also been forced to adapt to the magical threat of the astral bacteria. They may be down, but they're not out—and the ones that survived are stronger than they were. Gamemasters should always keep this in mind when creating adventures based around the insect spirits in Chicago.

Also, remember that only Chicago's bugs were introduced to the Strain-III virus. Other bug spirits around the world may still be "normal" (insofar as that concept applies to a bug spirit ...).

Free Bugs

One adaptation, caused by the sudden loss of numerous queen spirits to the Strain-III Beta, is the appearance of free bug spirits. Normally the death of a queen means the death of her hive. However, the age of certain hives, the background count in the area, the higher proportion of "good merges" and the unusually high concentration of insect spirits in the CZ all helped create a remarkable new trend: free bug spirits. Like their elemental and nature spirit counterparts, these free spirits are not bound to a shaman or a queen bug. They can devise and pursue their own agenda.

Rules for free spirits appear on pages 76–83 of **Grimoire II.**

For bugs in the former CZ (and anywhere else the gamemaster deems appropriate), when a hive's queen dies, the gamemaster makes a Force Test for each of the insect spirits in that hive against a target number equal to twice the Force of the queen spirit. Good merges—those that scored 5 or more successes on their Willpower Test when invested with a spirit, as described on p. 137 of **Bug City** or p. 102 of **Grimoire II**—receive a –2 modifier to the target number for the Force Test. If the spirit rolls at least 1 success, it goes free. Like standard free spirits, a free bug begins with a Spirit Energy of 1, but it loses half its Force when its queen dies.

Free insect spirits can collect Karma from metahumans and obtain the same powers as standard free spirits. However, free bugs can also increase their spirit energy by draining Force from other spirits. This power is unique to free bugs, and works exactly like the Essence Drain critter power (p. 217, **SRII**). The ratio of transfer in these cases is 4:1 (even worse than the transfer ratio for a mundane metahuman), which means that the spirit must drain 4 Force Points from the target before it receives 1 Karma Point. The advantage for the bugs is that the transfer need not be voluntary.

A free bug spirit can only be a trickster, a shadow or a hunters. Hunters, as their name implies, prey upon other spirits and exist solely to dominate through destruction.

Keep in mind that the native metaplane of the insect spirits is a mystery to most magicians. For that reason (unless the gamemaster decides to allow a special exception), only insect shamans may perform astral quests to discover a free bug's true name in order to control or destroy it. This restriction makes free insect spirits particularly dangerous opponents for most player characters.

GHOULS

Of all the humanoid creatures that inhabit the Awakened world, ghouls have probably suffered the most. In recent years, the ghouls' position in society has begun to improve. Increasing (but still small) numbers of ghouls have managed to live in peace with other people, and there are occasional rumors of ghouls with cybereyes and plastic surgery passing themselves off as normal metahumans. Special Order 162, passed by the Illinois legislature in 2053, even granted ghouls legal protection and set up the Cabrini Refuge in Chicago. The act was repealed in 2054 after intense pressure from its opponents, leaving the ghouls on their own once more, but it remained an important step in the slow recognition that ghouls could no longer be dismissed as mere monsters. Ghouls moved a step closer to acceptance in mainstream society when the diaries of Tamir Grey, an influential ghoul spokesperson trapped in the Containment Zone, were smuggled out and published in 2057. The firsthand account of the sufferings and nobility of the relief worker who had become a ghoul sparked public sympathy for his plight.

When Ares released copious amounts of Strain-III Beta bacteria into the CZ, the bacteria hit the dual-natured ghouls just as hard as it did the insect spirits. Few survived, and the ill-fated ghouls of the Cabrini Refuge became martyrs for the newly founded Ghoul Liberation League and the Metahuman Rights and Empowerment Coalitions. However, these ghoul-rights movements have not gained much momentum in the public eye. Exceptional individuals like Tamir Grey aside, the vast majority of

the ghouls are indeed mindless monsters that prey on those incapable of defending themselves. They are liable to snatch children for a midnight snack, and would just as soon eat you as talk to you. This image of the ghoul is most familiar to the average denizen of the Shadowrun world.

The source of most people's hatred for ghouls comes from their preference for eating human corpses. They must consume approximately 1 percent of their body weight in metahuman flesh per week in order to maintain their health and get needed nutrition, but the bulk of a ghoul's diet may be any other kind of raw flesh. Ghouls find cooked meat indigestible; it can make them ill, just as raw meat does many metahumans. The generous bequest in Dunkelzahn's will to the first company that develops synthetic flesh for ghouls (see p. 31, **Portfolio of a Dragon**) have sparked ongoing research into this area, but so far these efforts have not gone beyond a few small corporations. (Dunkelzahn's award is a pittance to any megacorp, but a huge draw for smaller companies.) Scientists have not yet managed to isolate the exact chemicals present in metahuman flesh that ghouls need to survive; a popular theory maintains that the ghouls' need for metahuman flesh has something to do with its metaphysical aura.

Metahumans who became ghouls were first thought to have goblinized, in a manner much like genetic expression into orks and trolls. Subsequent investigation, however, showed that ghouls were created by the Krieger strain of the Human-Metahuman Vampiric Virus (HMHVV), a communicable disease. This revelation has fueled the crusade against ghouls as people began to fear that they might become ghouls themselves. Unconfirmed reports exist of some ghouls reproducing by infecting other metahumans, similar to the way vampires pass along their condition. However, the vast majority of ghouls are born that way. As with any disease, it may not be passed to one's offspring; however, most children of ghouls are born infected.

Almost all ghouls who remain functional members of society hide their condition through a combination of perfumes (their dietary preferences give ghouls foul body odor), plastic surgery (to alleviate their hereditary skin condition) and cybereyes (to hide their telltale milky-white, pupilless eyes). All ghouls suffer from a degree of physical blindness. However, their dual nature allows them to see perfectly well on the astral plane. Ghouls cannot see colors or fine details in non-living objects, which keeps them from making effective use of most technological devices. Many of the more socially adapted ghouls use cybereyes to overcome this problem, provided they can find a street doc willing to implant cyberware in a ghoul.

Ghouls as Player Characters

With the ghoul community growing and with sympathy for their plight increasing, a ghoul can be a workable player character if the gamemaster chooses to allow it. A character should never be allowed to begin the game as a ghoul, but may become infected during the course of play. The following rules give the gamemaster a way to handle such situations.

Like other metahumans, ghouls have certain strengths and weaknesses, which are listed on the Ghoul Characteristics table.

GHOUL CHARACTERISTICS

+1 Body, Strength and increase Running multiplier by 1
–1 to Essence (if applicable) and Magic Rating
Moderate Allergy to sunlight
Enhanced Smell and Hearing (–2 modifier to target numbers of all Perception Tests based on these senses)
Near-blindness
Dual-natured
Immune to the VITAS plague

Infection

Player characters and non-player characters alike can become infected with the Krieger Strain of HMHVV. It is transmitted through bodily fluids, and is most commonly contracted through a bite or scratch inflicted by a carrier of the disease. A character exposed to the virus must make an unaugmented or natural Body (4) Test. The results appear on the Krieger Strain Infection table.

KRIEGER STRAIN INFECTION

Successes	Result
0	Infected
1	Permanent effect (gamemaster's discretion)
2	Sickness
3	No effect

A character who rolls 2 successes escapes infection, but he will feel weak, dizzy and ill for ten days or so. One success means that the character feels sick and also suffers some permanent ill effects from his brush with HMHVV: some degree of blindness, skin discoloration and so on. However, the character does not actually become a ghoul. No successes means that the character has been infected, and it is only a matter of time until he suffers from all the symptoms of the disease in their worst form. Even if a character rolls 3 successes and fights off the disease without any ill effects, he or she may still become a carrier (possibly without knowing it!).

The disease takes approximately ninety days to run its course, going through three stages of roughly equal duration. No outward signs appear during the first stage, but the virus can be treated if it is detected. During the second stage, outward symptoms of ghoul nature gradually develop: they may include fading eyesight, a craving for raw meat, inability to keep down real food and general discomfort. In the third stage the victim begins deteriorating mentally, as his mind adapts to the changes in his body, and he also develops the characteristics of a dual-natured being. Some people fare better than others at this point. To reflect this, a character in the third stage of infection should make a Willpower (6) Test. The Third Stage Infection table, p. 101, describes the effects of the illness based on the number of successes rolled. Regardless, all infected characters receive the common ghoul characteristics listed above.

THIRD STAGE INFECTION	
Successes	**Effect**
0	–3 to Intelligence and Charisma. Inability to deal well with metahumans. Mentally, not much more than an animal.
1	–2 to Intelligence and Charisma. Some semblance of personality left.
2	–1 to Intelligence and Charisma. Personality left mostly intact.
3+	+1 Willpower. Almost complete retention of personality and intellect.

A magically active character who becomes a ghoul retains his or her magical abilities and spells, though he is unlikely to be able to use them unless he rolls some successes on the Willpower (6) Test. If a cybered character turns into a ghoul, there is a chance that the cyberware will not survive the transformation. Bioware is automatically lost, absorbed into the new ghoul's system. For cyberware, the gamemaster should roll a number of dice determined by the cyberware's quality according to the following table. The gamemaster may also roll additional dice equal to the number of successes generated by the character on the Willpower (6) Test.

CYBERWARE GRADE	DICE
Normal	4
Alpha	5
Beta	7
Delta	10

The target number for the test is determined by the type of cyberware. A Target Number of 6 applies to any cyberware with considerable neural interfacing (wired reflexes, skillwires and virtually all headware). Other cyberware has a Target Number of 4. The number of successes rolled determines how well the cyberware survived the character's transformation, as described on the Cyberware Effects table. If the gamemaster does not wish to roll for each individual piece of cyberware, he may use the results of the Willpower (6) Test to give a general overview of how well a character's cyberware fared.

CYBERWARE EFFECTS	
Successes	**Effect on Cyberware**
0–1	Cyberware no longer functions
2	Works at about half efficiency, with a +2 modifier to all target numbers for appropriate tests
3–4	Occasional failures and general problems
5+	No ill effects

CAMPAIGN THEMES

This section offers gamemasters ways to incorporate the themes and ideas presented in this sourcebook into their own games. Each theme gives a general premise and a specific scenario that gamemasters can tailor to their own characters. Keep in mind that while the adventures are meant to be played in the Chicago area, most can easily be tweaked to work in a campaign set elsewhere. We recommend that players skip this section, in order to avoid spoiling their own fun. With any campaign or adventure set in the aftermath of Operation Extermination, gamemasters should keep in mind that things are meant to be mysterious in the Containment Zone. Rumors abound, and no one is quite sure what's really going on. Confusion and uncertainty should be constant undertones in the game.

Children of Oblivion

Even though the Containment Zone officially no longer exists, life inside it goes on much as it did before. The insect spirits pose much less of a danger than they once did, and people can move into and out of the CZ much more easily in the absence of the blockade. But the CZ remains a dangerous place to call home. In the vacuum left by the departing UCAS and Ares troops, local warlords and gangs vie for power and attempt to drive away outsiders so that their own positions remain secure.

The main theme for this type of campaign is rebuilding in the wake of Operation Extermination. Many citizens chose to remain in their homes even after the blockade ended, finding life more bearable in the Zone now that the insects have been largely eliminated. Relief workers brave the warlords, gangs and remaining insect spirits to provide aid to the struggling inhabitants of the former Containment Zone. The characters may find themselves on any side of the conflict, or perhaps caught in the middle as one of the constant turf wars engulfs their normal stomping ground.

Blackout

With the end of the quarantine, opportunities abound for shadowrunners, as the government and the megacorps all mount operations into the CZ to find out as much as they can about its current situation. Information is power, after all, and the corps want as much as they can get. In addition to information, corporations and other private individuals are making forays into Chicago to secure various interests. More than a few corps that fled the Zone two years ago left behind some valuable technology; now they're eager to salvage whatever is left and make sure the tech doesn't fall into the wrong hands.

In this type of campaign, the most important thing to remember is that nobody except Ares really knows what went down in the CZ. Are the bugs really gone? What did Ares do with the Strain-III? What sort of tidbits did the megacorps leave behind when they abandoned Chicago two years ago? These are the sorts of questions that everyone wants answered, and they're going to use shadowrunners to get those answers.

Bug Hunt

Despite Ares's grand claims to the contrary, the Containment Zone is not free of bug spirits, not by a long shot. Some of the insects

have developed an immunity to the Strain-III bacteria, and plenty that were significantly weakened by it are still around (and still no pushovers, either). An entire campaign based on exterminating insect hives might get old after awhile, but the occasional hack-and-slash romp through the sewers or a corp high-rise could provide a nice change of pace.

The gamemaster can use the uncertainties of Strain-III to his advantage, aiding a team that would normally have no chance against a bug hive or lulling a team into thinking the spirits are weakened when in fact they're just as powerful as ever. Ares has pulled out most of its Knight Errant troops to pursue its interests elsewhere, so the remainder of the extermination must be carried out by others.

The bad thing about the survival of the fittest is that the fittest are usually harder to kill. In the wake of the Cermak Blast and Operation Extermination, the insect spirits were forced to adapt in order to survive. They have also learned from their mistakes, and have gotten much more subtle. They've learned to hide their hives better and to be more choosy about their prey in order to increase the percentage of good merges.

Before its exposure, the insect spirits made extensive use of the Universal Brotherhood. Since then, a new organization has taken the Brotherhood's place: the Secret Hive. The bugs have placed agents of the Secret Hive in key positions in various world organizations, using good merges or cooperative metahumans to do their dirty work. In other areas of society, various bug cults have originated. Like the insect shamans who summon the spirits to this world, followers of these cults believe they can gain favor or power from the bugs. Many of them are not playing with a full deck, and can be dangerous opponents. Such cults are especially prominent in the former CZ.

This theme can help a campaign where the players have become complacent or cocky about taking on bug hives. If the players are already worried about the bugs, this type of campaign is the gamemaster's opportunity to instill even more fear in them. The Secret Hive can be worked into just about any adventure simply by having one of the runners' opponents turn out to be a Hive agent. Gamemasters who wish to incorporate the Secret Hive into their campaigns should look at the adventure **Dead Run** from **Shadows of the Underworld.**

Rescue

Even before the abolition of the Containment Zone, wealthy and determined individuals were hiring shadowrunning teams for rescue missions into the CZ, to find information on loved ones trapped inside. When the Wall fell there was a mass exodus of refugees from the Zone, but thousands of people chose to stay. Some were afraid of the remaining bugs or the warlords; others were simply unwilling or unable to leave their homes. The turbulent aftermath of President Haeffner's declaration did little to reassure people of their safety inside the CZ, and left many outsiders unwilling to venture inside.

Possible variations on the rescue theme are almost endless. The runners may be hired to search for someone's family member, either to bring them out of the Zone (which could prove interesting if the person doesn't want to leave) or simply to determine if the person is alive or dead. Even the megacorps are getting into the hide-and-seek game, as they try to track down employees trapped in the CZ. They may want to ensure that all their people are brought back to the fold, or at the very least that their stranded workers don't end up in someone else's fold.

Ghoul Liberation League

The ghoul-rights movement has grown in strength over the past few years, though it remains small by most standards. However, the fate of the ghouls in the Cabrini Refuge has many metahuman-rights activists up in arms. Among those is a militant group that calls itself the Ghoul Liberation League. The League is made up almost entirely of ghouls, but there are a handful of others working with them. They want equal rights and formal recognition as a metahuman race and will stop at nothing to reach their goals. After the disappearance of Tamir Grey, ghoul leadership has fallen to more vocal and belligerent individuals such as Blaine Hammond (see p. 151, **Bug City**).

The characters may wind up working for the League (with or without realizing it), or may be hired to thwart one of the League's operations. Not all members of the League are up to nefarious deeds. Some, like the organization presented in the adventure **Eyewitness,** are actually working peacefully within society to further their goals.

Strange Bedfellows

Unlike the wasp, ant, roach and other "evil" spirits that have been terrorizing shadowrunners and civilians for years, mantis spirits and metahumans have seemingly been fighting on the same side. However, despite their apparent good intentions, one can never be completely certain of the mantis's motives. They hunt other insect spirits, but they also seek humans to use as hosts, so anyone dealing with the mantids is certainly taking a chance. The Strain-III Beta in the CZ did not distinguish between the mantids and other insect spirits, which did not go over very well with the resident mantids. Relations between metahumans and their strange allies, always strained, are more tenuous now than ever.

Mantids have their own agenda, which metahumans find incomprehensible. No one is really sure what they're up to, and the fact that they use metahumans as hosts makes some people squeamish. Mantis spirits and shamans can skillfully manipulate people for their own ends, and the player characters might be next unless they're very careful. Gamemasters who want to build on this theme should read the adventures **Dead Run** in **Shadows of the Underworld** and **Casualties of War** in **Super Tuesday.**

Damage Control

Despite the apparent success of Operation Extermination, Ares made more than a few enemies by its disregard for the political, magical and ecological consequences of its actions. As other corporations try to jump on the bandwagon and develop their own versions of the Strain-III bacteria, their doings spark a flurry of activity in the shadow community. Datasteals, raids on research facilities and missions into the former CZ to gather samples of the bacteria provide numerous opportunities for shadowruns. The aftermath of Operation Extermination also presents potential opportunities for various magical organizations around the coun-

try, all of whom are worried about the effects that mass quantities of Strain-III might have on Chicago's magical environment. They have been funding research efforts to determine what is going on, and are particularly interested in studying the mysterious Voids so that they can find a way to get rid of them.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

This section offers short adventure ideas for the Chicago Containment Zone. The gamemaster can flesh out these ideas using the material presented in **Chicago—Oblivion's End?**

Ghouls R Us

After spending a year near starvation in hiding from the insect spirits, former Mitsuhama employee Hank Perry stumbled onto a recruitment drive held by the inhabitants of Ghoultown. Lured by the relative safety of the Cabrini Refuge, Hank allowed himself to be infected with the HMHVV virus and became a ghoul. The transformation didn't go well, however, and left little of his former personality intact.

An executive at Mitsuhama, unaware of Hank's fate, hires the player characters to retrieve him. Hank had some valuable R&D data stored in his headware memory, and Mitsuhama needs it back. The player characters must track Hank down into the Cabrini Refuge, where they must face the bitter survivors of Ghoultown.

Smoking Gun

A member of the Empowerment Coalition, Rasa Namyr, has come into possession of a video clip showing some of Ares's early Strain-III experiments on ghouls. One section of the video shows a ghoul strapped to a table while the bacteria sucks him dry of life. This clip could turn public opinion sharply against Ares, so the corp wants to make sure it never comes to light. After a handful of attempts to buy her silence, Rasa hires the player characters to protect her until she can pass the tape on to the other members of her organization.

Trouble is, Rasa isn't quite what she appears to be. She's a mantis spirit (a weak one, which is why she needs help), and she needs to get the video clip to a mantis hive in Denver. Meanwhile, Ares falls back on Plan B. Since money hasn't talked, maybe guns will. They send some serious muscle to retrieve the video clip. The player characters are caught between the bugs and the megacorp, with the truth up for grabs.

Two Masters

A representative of the Dunkelzahn Institute of Magical Research hires the player characters to do some research for them. The DIMR wants to find an easy way to neutralize the Strain-III bacteria and prevent any further damage to astral space in the CZ. The "research" involves a raid on BacteriTech, Ares's subsidiary in Detroit, whose researchers first developed FAT-Bacteria and later the Strain-III Beta virus. Unknown to the runners, the DIMR representative is really from Aztechnology, and that corp is interested in anything it can learn about manipulating astral space. Meanwhile, the DIMR has sent their own team into BacteriTech.

In addition to facing serious security at BacteriTech—Knight Errant troops and the latest and greatest in FAT-Bac and magical defenses—the runners must decide who they are really working for and who they believe.

Give the People What They Want

King Vlad, one of the more influential warlords in the CZ, has become more aggressive since the bugs' apparent departure. Lately he has taken to raiding relief shipments meant for the citizens left in the CZ. Controlling the food supply means controlling the people, and Vlad wants to cement his authority.

Fearing that other gangers in the city might try to depose him, Vlad has sent some of his most trusted associates to hire people from outside the CZ to work for him. Under the guise of a private security firm, one of these associates contacts the player characters and offers them a job to help take back some items belonging to one of his clients. In reality the runners are stealing food, clothing and miscellaneous supplies meant for various inhabitants of the CZ; Vlad intends to sell everything they bring him, making him the hero of the Zone and possibly strengthening his position whenever the Zone's various warlords start negotiating over who will run what in Chicago.

King Vlad the Destroyer

Using the same set-up as above, the player characters may be hired to protect relief shipments from Vlad's hired thugs and make sure the people get their goods cheaply and safely.

Scraping the Sky

Legend Industries abandoned its corporate skyscraper downtown when the insect spirits flooded Chicago two years ago. Wasp spirits used the building's upper stories as a hive, and since then no one has been able to get to those floors. Now that the Strain-III Beta has done its work, however, the wasps are no longer as much of a problem.

A Mr. Johnson working for Legend hires the player characters to break into the skyscraper and retrieve a vital piece of communications technology—a new satellite linkup module—left behind when the building was abandoned. Unfortunately, the death of the wasp queen created a free bug spirit that considers the top floors of the Legend skyscraper its personal domain. The player characters must fight a powerful free bug in order to survive.

Truth Hurts

John Packwell was first listed as missing when he missed his corporation's last shuttle out of the CZ. His wife, Laura, believes he is still alive somewhere in the Zone, and has finally managed to scrape together enough nuyen to hire some muscle to find him.

The gamemaster can introduce the player characters to Laura in a number of ways—the Shadowlands BBS, rumors through the grapevine, or through the runners' regular fixer. Laura hires the player characters to escort her to Chicago and help her search for her husband. After facing just about everything the Containment Zone can throw at them, from surviving bug spirits to the savage Volk to marauding warlords and gangers, the player characters finally find evidence that John Packwell is really dead. Now they must convince their employer to accept this—and every day they stay in the CZ searching for a dead man, the likelier they are to succumb to its dangers.

FREE SUMMARIZED MAPS OF MAJOR ROADS FOR TRAVELING, SIGHTSEEING AND GENERAL INFORMATION
BOSTON – THE HUB
95
114
93
RT 128
Salem
93
107
95
CAMBRIDGE
DOWNTOWN
MIT&T
90
MASSACHUSETTS BAY
ROX
93
28
93
95
DETROIT – MOTOR CITY
The Blight
59
275
75
53
94
696
10
102
Metroplex Border
Downtown
96
Lake St. Clair
38
Windsor
94
3
75

INDEX

A

Ancients gang, 39
Ares Arms, 53, 58
Ares Macrotechnology, 6, 7, 46
  bughunters, 17
  buyout of, 49-51
  enemies and secrets of, 66–67
  Ford/GMC negotiations, 57
  founding of, 48-49
  inner conflicts, 64-65
  Operation Extermination. *See* Operation Extermination
Auburn Blight, 57, 58-60
Aurelius, Leonard, 48, 49, 50, 61-62, 91
  battles with Knight, 50-51, 53
  Dunkelzahn's chess gift to, 64
  Vogel and, 64
Aurelius, Nicholas, 48-49, 53, 61, 66

B

Belle Isle, 55
Boston
  Back Bay, 29
  Beacon Hill, 29
  biotechnology, 26, 42-43
  Bloody Thursday, 39, 89
  Boston Harbor, 42
  Catacombs, 43-45
  corporations in, 24, 26
  cost of living, 87
  Crowhaven Circle, 36
  Dunkelzahn Institute of Magical Research, 33-34
  elves in, 38
  gangs in, 39
  getting in/out, 87
  Harvard, 33
  history of, 24, 26-28
  magic in, 31-37
  Mama, 45, 89
  MIT&T, 28, 31-33
  Native American Nations and, 36-37
  organized crime in, 40-42
  private security companies in, 27
  Prudential Center, 29
  Route 128, 29-30
  Rox, 13, 27, 28, 37-41
  running in, 88-90
  Southie, 37-39
  stock exchange in, 28-29
  subway system, 43-45
  tribes in, 40, 45
  witches of Salem, 34-36
Bowling, Gen. Steven Coe, 13
Brooks, Carla, 10, 12
Bug City, 14, 15. *See also* Chicago
Bughunters, 66, 100-101
Bug spirits, 6, 59-60, 66

C

Cabrini Refuge, 73-74, 81-82, 98-99, 102
California Free State, 7, 18, 19-20
Catacombs, 88, 89
Chicago, 6, 8
  adventure ideas in, 102
  background counts in, 84, 96
  bug situation, 16-18, 97-98
  campaigns in, 100-102
  Containment Zone, 6, 13, 16-17, 46, 59-60, 68, 72-74, 84-85,100
  ghouls in, 98-100, 101
  magic in, 82-84
  Operation Extermination, 75-78, 92, 100
  paranatural zoological experiment, 70-71
  refuges, 78-79, 90
  remaining citizens, 79-81
  running in, 92-102
  Voids in, 84, 96-97
  Wall, 78-79
Confederate American States, 7, 11, 18-19
Cross, Lucien, 56
Cross Applied Technologies, 56, 91
CrossCorp, 42, 65
Crowhaven Circle, 36

D

Daviar, Nadja, 8, 66
  Dunkelzahn assassination and, 9
  elves and, 21
  Gavilan Ventures deal and, 51, 53, 64
Dearborn, 56-57
DeeCee, 11
  Dunkelzahn's assassination, effects on, 18-19
Department of Paranormal Investigation, 15
Detroit, 6, 46
  anti-Ares factions, 66
  Ares Industries, 48-49
  Ares Macrotechnology buyout, 49-51
  Auburn Blight, 57, 58-60
  Belle Isle, 55
  bug hunting, 66
  cost of living, 87
  Dearborn, 56-57
  downtown, 53-55
  dragon riots in, 52-53
  gambling in, 56
  getting in/out, 87
  Greektown, 54
  history of, 48-53
  inter-Ares conflicts, 64-65
  Knight, Damien, 60-61
  Mafia, 56
  Oakland County, 57-58
  parazoological studies in, 55
  Rivertown district, 55
  Royal Oak, 57
  running in, 90-91
  Toronto-Quebec Front, 65
  Vogel, Arthur, 63-64
  Windsor and, 54, 55, 56
Draco Foundation, 33, 34
Dunkelzahn, 12
  assassination of, 6, 7, 8, 14
  campaign for president, 51-52
  dragon riots, 52-53
  ownership of Gavilan Ventures by, 50-51, 52
Dunkelzahn Institute of Magical Research, 33-34, 102

E

Eagle Security, 27, 62, 63
East Coast Stock Exchange, 24, 26, 28, 49, 50, 88, 89
Echo Mirage, 51-52
Ehran the Scribe, 21, 33
Eve Night, 91

F

FBI, 8-9, 13
  Paranormal Affairs Division, 17
First Canadians, 56
Ford Motor Company, 54-57, 66
Fuchi Industrial Electronics, 6, 7, 30-31, 66
  Nakatomis, 30, 31
  Yamanas, 30, 31

G

Gavilan, Maj. David, 52, 62
Gavilan Ventures, 50-51, 64, 66
General Motors, 54–55, 57, 66
Ghost Dance, 18, 15, 36-37, 48, 49, 62
Ghouls, 73-74, 81-82, 98-100, 101
Gottschalk, Raoul, 91
Grey, Tamir, 81, 98

H

Haeffner, Kyle
  abolishing Containment Zone, 72-74
  Aztlan and, 22
  California Free State and UCAS, 19
  campaign for vice president, 51-52
  dragon riots and, 53
  Dunkelzahn assassination and, 9
  law and order under, 13
  Native American Nations, 20-21
  State of the Union address, 7-8
Harbor Barrens, 12
HardCorps, Inc., 58, 62, 63
Harvard, 33
Hildebrandt, Col. Edward, 35-36

I–J

Insect shamans, 9
Insect spirits, 9, 16-18, 81, 97-98
Jail, magicians and, 15-16
Justice Department, Magical Task Force, 17

K

Kazinsky, Holly, 72-74
King Vlad, 85, 102
Kirkpatrick, Commander Andrew, 72-74
Knight, Damien, 6-8, 16, 46, 48, 60-61, 91
  battles with Aurelius, 50-51, 53
  buyout of Ares Macrotechnology by, 49-51
  Dunkelzahn and, 51-52, 64
  Operation Extermination, 92
Knight Errant Security, 12, 61-62
  Boston security by, 27, 29
  bughunters, 17
  Catacombs and, 43
  CEO of, 62-63
  Chicago refuges and, 51, 59-60
  crime containment by, 58
  dragon riots and, 53
  magic and, 15
Knight Plaza, 53
Kreiger Strain of HMHVV, 99

L

Lanier, Miles, 30
Law enforcement, 13-14
Lone Star Security Services, 13-15, 27, 63
Lynn, Rep. Sarah, 12

M

McCaskill, Don Leo, 56, 85, 91
Mafia, 40-41, 56, 66, 85, 90-91
Mama's Boys gang, 40
Matrix, 26, 28-29, 50, 91
MIT&T, 28, 31-33, 36, 51, 89
Mitsuhama Corporation, 11, 66, 91, 102
Morelli, Don "Fat Tony," 41

N–Q

Nanosecond Buyout, 49-51, 60, 67
Native American Nations, 7, 18, 20-21, 62
Nishio, Tom, 85
Operation Extermination, 92
O'Neil, Charles, mayor of Boston, 27
O'Rilley, Conor, 41
Quinn, Marcus, 85

R

Ralph, Sen. David, 11
Ravenheart, Capt. Anne, 62
Renraku Corporation, 6, 17, 30-31
Roxx gang, 39
Royal Oak, 57

S

Schultz, Marilyn, 20
Scott, Chief Justice Richard, 10-11
Scott Commission, 7,
  members of, 10-13
  suspects, 8-10
Sierra, Inc., 63-64
Soaring-Owl, Roger, background on, 62-63
Stephanopoulus, Don Roland "The Greek," 56, 85, 91
Strain-III Beta, 70-72, 73, 78, 83, 92-96, 101

T

Tir na nOg, 38, 88
Tir Tairngire, 19, 20, 21-22
Toronto-Quebec Front, 65
Treaty of Denver, 20, 48
Triads syndicate, 41, 42
True Canadians, 65

V–Z

Villiers, Richard, 6, 7, 30-31, 89
Vogel, Arthur, 12, 27, 63-64, 65
Windsor, 54, 55, 56
Witches of Salem, 34-36
Yakuza, 41, 42, 89
Yeats, Gen. Franklin, 16, 60, 81

The Chaotic State of the UCAS!

The United Canadian and American States is in turmoil. In the past year, the great dragon Dunkelzahn won a special presidential election—and was assassinated on the night of his triumph. Savage riots broke out and have barely subsided; inexplicable magical phenomena have triggered a vicious anti-Awakened backlash; and corporate backstabbing and political intrigue are reaching new lows as everyone who can makes a play for the big time. And nowhere in the UCAS are the aftershocks as fierce as in three of its greatest cities: Boston, Detroit and Chicago.

Boston, home of the East Coast Stock Exchange, has been neutral territory for years. But now Richard Villiers of Fuchi Corporation is rumored to be undertaking a secret operation there, and Boston's shadows are jumping.

Detroit is the ultimate company town, home base of Ares Macrotechnology and Damien Knight's personal fiefdom. But all is not well in Aresville—Knight's ego is getting too big for his bottom line, and bad trouble is brewing.

And Chicago, better known as Bug City, has finally been cured of the insect spirits that infested it … or has it? And could the cure be worse than the disease?

Target: UCAS contains a wealth of information for players and gamemasters: adventure frameworks that allow gamemasters to jump right into these explosive cities, rules for ghoul player characters and free bug spirits, and more. **Target: UCAS** is intended for gamemasters and players of all experience levels. For use with **Shadowrun** and the **Shadowrun Companion: Beyond the Shadows**.

FASA CORPORATION

SHADOWRUN®

51500
9 781555 603144
ISBN# 1-55560-314-9 $15.00

Shadowrun® is a Registered Trademark of FASA Corporation. *Target: UCAS*™ is a Trademark of FASA Corporation. Copyright © 1997 FASA Corporation. All Rights Reserved. Printed in the USA.